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Froilan 'Lang' Tenorio, 80

By IVA MAURIN
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REPORTER

Former governor Froilan "Lang" Tenorio, who served from 1994 to 1998 as the fourth governor of the CNMI, passed away on May 4, 2020 in Fort Worth, Texas. He was 80 years old.

To honor him, all flags across the Commonwealth were all lowered yesterday to half-staff.

Gov. Ralph DLG Torres, who announced Tenorio's passing yesterday via a proclamation, said, "Lt. Gov. [Arnold I.] Palacios and I, along with our families, join the Commonwealth in mourning the passing of Governor Tenorio. Our prayers are with his wife Grace, their children, and grandchildren."

Torres paid homage to Tenorio's many roles in CNMI

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Both the American flag and CNMI flag in front of the Guma Hustisia are flown at half-staff yesterday, same as with all flags across the Commonwealth, to honor former governor Froilan "Lang" Tenorio, who passed away on May 4, 2020, in Texas. Inset shows Tenorio's photo on display at a wall in the CNMI House of Representatives, where Tenorio was a former speaker. KRIZEL TUAZON/IVA MAURIN

1 presumptive positive case

By JUSTINE NAUTA
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REPORTER

An asymptomatic 17-year-old male has been declared a presumptive case for COVID-19 after testing positive at the mass testing site at the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport.

This individual, who had no symptoms for COVID-19, is now considered a person under investigation and has been isolated at Kanoa Resort,

See PRESUMPTIVE on Page 4

RELATED NEWS

- Saipan doing well with COVID-19 infections. PAGE 9

AT A GLANCE

As of 6pm, May 5, 2020**

GUAM	OLD	NEW	TOTAL
Positive	149	1	149
Recovered	125	0	124
Active	12	7	19
Deaths	6*	0	6*

SAIPAN	OLD	NEW	TOTAL
Positive	14	0	14
Recovered	11	0	12
Active	0	0	0
Deaths	2	0	2
Cumulative Number of Persons Tested			1,480

*Total includes a sailor from the USS *Theodore Roosevelt*.

**Saipan has gone 18 days with no new positive cases and 1,480 persons tested at the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport. Guam goes one day with no confirmed positive case.

Source: Joint Information Center - Guam, Commonwealth Health Care Corp.

Phases eyed in reopening economy

By BEA CABRERA
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CORRESPONDENT

Fresh from the Fiscal Response Summit last week, the Saipan Chamber of Commerce headed by president Velma Palacios and other business leaders have started preliminary talks about reopening the CNMI economy and encouraged Gov. Ralph DLG Torres to consider lifting some of his restrictions to get the economy started without compromising the community's health and safety.

Palacios

See PHASES on Page 4

Carrier prepares to go back to sea after virus outbreak

By LOLITA C. BALDOR
ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON (AP)—It's time to get back to work.

On board the coronavirus-stricken USS *Theodore Roosevelt*, the crew is getting the aircraft carrier ready to head

See CARRIER on Page 4

INSIDE

BUSINESS
Monster Pizza Pub located in Garapan is one of many businesses that did not close down.
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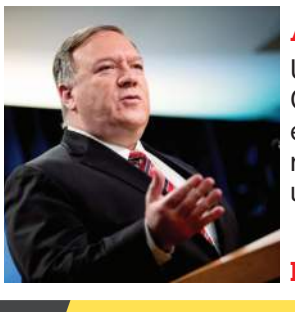

ASIA
U.S. officials believe China covered up the extent of the coronavirus outbreak to stock up on supplies.
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Taika Waititi, the New Zealand filmmaker, will direct a new "Star Wars" film.
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Local

Bayani group donates rice to 75 recipients

A Filipino organization recently gave away 20-lb bags of rice each to 75 beneficiaries to help meet the increasing need for food as the COVID-19 pandemic drags on.

The Bayani Association, which is a subgroup under the United Filipino Organization, has been distributing care packages in the last couple of weeks to families in need.

"…Our assistance [may be] limited but… we['re] do[ing] something for the community in our little way, knowing [that] all of us are affected by this global crisis," said Bayani Association president Leonila Mendoza.

She encourages other organizations to also extend a helping hand to people in need during this coronavirus pandemic. "We…want to entice others to do the same, if they can extend any help possible for people who are in need."

In a separate telephone interview, Bayani Association secretary Mario Mayuga said that there is no way for them to help everyone who is disadvantaged since the organization is also dependent on donors. He said the donations were given to local residents, as well as members of the Filipino and Chinese communities.

Mayuga said he is just glad that the organization has an opportunity to help the community. He also extended Bayani's appreciation to Alpex Saipan Inc. for their generous help and assured that they will continue handing out relief goods in the weeks to come.

Those who wish to donate rice, canned goods, and butane may call Mendoza at 287-7563 or Mayuga at 285-1021. ***(Chevy Alipio)***

One of the beneficiaries of the Bayani Association shows off the bag of rice that she got. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

SBA makes economic injury disaster loans available to US agri businesses

WASHINGTON, D.C.—The U.S. Small Business Administration said that agricultural businesses are now eligible for SBA's Economic Injury Disaster Loan and EIDL Advance programs.

SBA's EIDL portal reopened yesterday as a result of funding authorized by Congress through the "Paycheck Protection Program and Healthcare Enhancement Act," according to SBA administrator Jovita Carranza yesterday. The legislation, signed into law a week ago, provided additional funding for farmers and ranchers and certain other agricultural businesses affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

"For more than 30 years, SBA has been prohibited by law from providing disaster assistance to agricultural businesses; however, as a result of the unprecedented legislation enacted by President Trump, American farmers, ranchers and other agricultural businesses will now have access to emergency working capital," said Carranza. "These low-interest, long-term loans will help keep agricultural businesses viable while bringing stability to the nation's vitally important food supply chains."

Agricultural businesses include businesses engaged in the legal production of food and fiber, ranching, and raising of livestock, aquaculture, and all other farming and agricultural related industries. Eligible agricultural businesses must have 500 or fewer employees.

The SBA will begin accepting new EIDL applications on a limited basis only, in order to provide unprecedented relief to U.S. agricultural businesses. For agricultural businesses that submitted an EIDL loan application through the streamlined application portal prior to the legislative change, SBA will move forward and process these applications without the need for re-applying. All other EIDL loan applications that were submitted before the portal stopped accepting new applications on April 15 will be processed on a first-in, first-out basis.

For more information, visit www.sba.gov/Disaster. ***(PR)***

Atalig files sealed motion to have charges dismissed

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

U.S. District Court for the NMI Chief Judge Ramona V. Manglona granted yesterday an agreement between the U.S. government and Rota Mayor Efraim M. Atalig for the mayor to file under seal a motion to dismiss the indictment filed against him.

Atalig and the U.S. government informed the court Monday that they've agreed that he may file the motion to dismiss the indictment under seal.

Atalig, through counsel David G. Banes, and the U.S. government, through assistant U.S. attorney Eric O'Malley, said they agreed to the sealed motion as it will reference information regarding the grand jury proceedings in this case and Henthorn materials covered by the court's protective order dated Feb. 25, 2020. Henthorn gives defense attorneys the right to any information in an agent's personnel record relating to dishonesty, perjury, and others that can be used to discredit an agent's testimony.

Manglona

Banes earlier informed the court that Atalig and his co-defendant, Evelyn Atalig, intend to file a motion to dismiss the indictment and a motion to allow their expert witness to review the grand jury and Henthorn materials in this case.

The charges against Efraim Atalig and his girlfriend, Evelyn Atalig, involve at least eight trips taken by the couple at different times in 2018 to Guam, Palau, the U.S. mainland, South Korea, and Saipan.

The Ataligs are being charged jointly with conspiracy to commit wire fraud and theft from program receiving federal funds, wire fraud, and theft from program receiving federal funds. Both are also charged separately with false statement.

The jury trial will be on July 7, 2020.

CUC applies for $57M grant

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

Commonwealth Utilities Corp. executive director Gary P. Camacho disclosed that their grants team submitted last month project applications worth $57 million for utility infrastructure, replacement, repair and/or feasibility studies.

Camacho

In his report during a CUC board of directors' meeting via video conference last Friday, Camacho said the projects include approximately $32 million in water/wastewater assets; $22 million in power generation and transmission, and $3 million in project development.

The biggest among the projects is the $12.17 million underground power distribution system for the Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. Under this project, CUC plans to install underground wires from the CUC Power Plant 1 in Lower Base to the Commonwealth Health Center in Garapan, which CHCC operates.

Another big project is the $9-million reverse osmosis and nano-filtration water system treatment.

Camacho said they expect more requests for information from the grantor as they progress in the review and approval process on project requirements and other architect and engineering services in site development, constructability, and studies to projects in this type of complexity and magnitude.

7 former workers say IPI's 4th change of counsel in a year is bad-faith tactic

The seven former workers who are suing Imperial Pacific International (CNMI) LLC are opposing IPI's decision to terminate their two lawyers and substitute Michael W. Dotts as its fourth lead counsel, describing it as a "bad-faith tactic."

The former workers, through counsel Aaron Halegua and Bruce Berline, said this tactic designed to further delay the collection and production of discovery at a time when IPI is shedding personnel, moving offices, and shutting down operations.

Halegua and Berline said they can perceive of no other logical reason for IPI to fire its former lawyers, Sean E. Frink and Catherine J. Cachero, roughly one year into this case. They said IPI offers no legitimate explanation for its decision—or any explanation at all.

A day after the federal court found IPI in civil contempt for violating the court's two orders regarding discovery in connection with a lawsuit against IPI and two others by seven former workers, IPI terminated the services of Frink and Cachero, and their Marianas Legal Strategy Group LLC law firm.

On the same day of the termination on April 17, IPI sought to substitute Dotts as its new counsel in this case.

In their opposition, Halegua and Berline asked the court to require IPI to provide an explanation for its termination of Frink, Cachero and MLSG law firm and deny the withdrawal motion, at least until IPI complies with the court's April 16, 2020, discovery order.

Regardless of how the motion is decided, the court should issue a clear warning that this proposed change of counsel will not justify any delay, Halegua and Berline said, and that IPI must comply with each and every aspect of the court's orders or it will be sanctioned.

The lawyers said all evidence suggests that the withdrawal of Frink, Cachero, and MLSG will necessarily cause delay. Halegua and Berline said the court should deny IPI's motion to substitute attorneys until it provides a compelling reason for changing counsel at this time and a plausible plan for meeting the court's deadlines.

After the complaint was filed in March 2019, IPI was first represented by Phillip Tydingco, followed by Kelley Butcher, who took over last December. Last March 3, Frink and Cachero of MLSG took over as lead counsel.

Last April 16, Manglona granted the former workers' motion to sanction IPI, saying that, if IPI fails to comply with the deadlines ordered that day, April 16, a monetary sanction of $2,000 a day will be imposed until IPI complies.

The plaintiffs, who are now based in China, are suing IPI and its contractor MCC International Saipan Ltd. Co. and subcontractor Gold Mantis Construction (CNMI) LLC over the alleged injuries they suffered during accidents at the worksite of IPI's casino/resort project in Garapan.

The plaintiffs alleged, among other things, that they were forced to work long hours for below minimum wage under extremely dangerous conditions at the casino-resort worksite.

In its response to the lawsuit, IPI said any wage claims by the plaintiffs are barred because they voluntarily illegally entered the CNMI to work.

(Ferdie De La Torre)

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'Transparency a must for all CARES Act contracts'

By IVA MAURIN
iva_maurin@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

A House of Representatives committee wants complete transparency in how the CNMI government will spend the $36 million it got through the CARES Act for its COVID-19 response in the CNMI.

Following the Department of Finance's release of the expenditure plan for the CARES Act funding, the House Special Committee on Federal Assistance and Disaster Related Funding wants a more detailed breakdown of how the funds will be spent.

The committee, chaired by Rep. Ralph Yumul (R-Saipan), met last Monday to talk about some unresolved issues on federal funds that the CNMI has received for help on COVID-19 and even for previous disasters.

"At least now, we have a spending plan and makes it easier now for us to go in and see [whether] they're really following the plan. We can question as how each sole-source is justified. I know we do have procurement rules in the CNMI, but when a large amount is being expended, sometimes, they deviate, and that's when things happen," said Yumul.

House floor leader John Paul Sablan (R-Saipan) specifically wants to see documents reflecting the contractual agreement between the government and the two designated quarantine sites on Saipan: the Kanoa Resort in Susupe and Pacific Islands Club Saipan in Afetna.

"I just got this morning the plan from the administration for the $36 million in the CARES Act," he said. "I was going through it, I know that some of those items are pretty much COVID-19-related, but none of it addresses the rental payment or the lease agreement for PIC and Kanoa."

Sablan specifically wants to know which source of funding is paying, and the actual amount, for the use of Kanoa and PIC. "Having this federal aid come into play, what does that result into, meaning how much of the local revenue from the local economy does it free up, and where are all of those local revenues directed to?"

Based on the expenditure plan, of the $36 million allocated to the CNMI for COVID-19 health care and community response, $200,000 will be for rental costs of the off-site quarantine facilities.

Not just Kanoa and PIC

Rep. Tina Sablan (Ind-Saipan) echoed this and proposed for the committee to also get not just the contracts with Kanoa and PIC, but also all the other contracts connected with the COVID-19 operations.

"A number of those [sole]-source contracts are going out toward catering, going out toward all kinds of supplies, testing kits, a charter flight, the renovations that are happening at the facility, these are all sorts of contracting," she said. "Although the governor, the administration has that authority in a state of emergency, it's really important to just bring some transparency to how much we're spending and to where is the money [going] exactly."

A call for the committee to have access to the weekly reports from the Department of Finance and the Office of Management and Budget, as directed by the governor, was also raised.

Rep. Joseph Lee Pan Guerrero (R-Saipan) said the committee must also be mindful whether a contract had actually been executed. Guerrero wants to know about Mariana Resort & Spa, one of the initial sites identified as a quarantine facility. "We want to know how much was expended when they were prepping it up, and why was it not utilized? We have to bear in mind that this is a pandemic. The governor has the authority whatsoever to use the facility because that's public property, money that can go back into DPL."

"I do understand that the business aspect needs this additional revenue for us to generate, but we have a huge facility away from the community. We're talking about safety. So why is it not being maximized at this point?" Guerrero asked.

House Federal and Foreign Affairs committee chair Luis John Castro (R-Saipan) proposed for the committee to meet regularly with the governor's authorized representative, to be kept abreast of COVID-19 operations and financing. "The main thing we're definitely going to need is a lot of a lot of transparency with this," Castro said.

FROILAN

From Page 1

politics, first as a CNMI senator, then as the CNMI's Washington representative, then as the CNMI's fourth governor, and finally as a member of the CNMI House of Representatives.

"Governor Tenorio led a great life that was highlighted by his decades of public service. He was a true statesman in every sense of the word. He was deeply devoted to our islands and worked hard to protect them during his years," Torres added.

Saipan Mayor David M. Apatang also extended his condolences to the former governor's wife and children. "Never tiring to make our CNMI the best place to live, raise a family, do business, and relax, Mr. Tenorio dared to steer our path toward growth, prosperity, and constant expansion of economy," Apatang said.

Like Apatang, Rep. Luis John Castro (R-Saipan) also paid tribute to Tenorio's legacy by reminding the CNMI of the former governor's role in improving the infrastructure of the islands, particularly its highways and telecommunication systems.

"One of his most recognized accomplishments while in office was the construction of the Saipan Beach Pathway in 1997, an iconic landmark still popular to this day for exercise and recreation which was renamed after him in 2016," said Castro. "Always straightforward and at times controversial, Tenorio left an indelible mark on the history of our islands," Castro added. "He leaves behind a legacy as someone who always tried to think ahead to move us as a territory and a people forward, because in his words he believed that, 'Clearly the world is changing, and so must we.'"

All flags in the CNMI—both the CNMI and U.S. flags—shall remain at half-staff until the day of Tenorio's interment.

Governor's statement

According to Torres, Tenorio was praised for his commitment to growing the economy as a way of creating jobs for the people of the CNMI. "He believed in private sector success and fiscal conservatism and worked hard to advocate for the CNMI's needs with the federal government.

"Beyond service to our Commonwealth, he had a deep love and passion for the Marianas. He believed in personal freedom for all residents who call the Marianas home, and his belief is represented every day when we walk along the Governor Froilan C. Tenorio Beach Road Pathway and enjoy the views of our beautiful Saipan lagoon," Torres added. "The Commonwealth will forever remember one of its most devoted public servants as a man who helped pave the way for our islands' progress."

Remembering Tenorio's life

Born on Sept. 9, 1939, to Albert Camacho Tenorio and Rita Dela Cruz Tenorio, the former governor grew up in Chalan Kanoa, completed his primary education at the Chalan Kanoa Elementary School in 1952, at the Saipan International School in 1954, and completed high school at the Duenas Memorial School of Tai in Guam in 1958.

Tenorio earned an associate degree from the College of Guam in 1962, and then his bachelor's degree in Civil Engineering from Marquette University of Milwaukee, in Wisconsin in 1967.

For four years, he began his career and worked as an engineering assistant at the Department of Public Works in Los Angeles, California, before returning to Saipan, and then eventually founding the Tenorio Construction Company.

He started serving the people of the CNMI in 1980, as a senator; as Washington representative from 1984 to 1990; as governor from 1994 to 1998; and as House speaker from 2010 to 2013.

CARRIER

From Page 1

back out to sea. For the ship's commander, Capt. Carlos Sardiello, the road to recovery has been a challenge. For the crew sidelined in Guam for more than a month, it's been an emotional roller coaster.

Sardiello was a former *Roosevelt* captain when he abruptly returned to the ship in early April to take command after Capt. Brett Crozier was fired for urging faster action to stem the virus outbreak onboard. In an Associated Press interview from the ship late Monday night, Sardiello said he had a simple message to the crew when he came aboard: "We have an unprecedented mission that we have never faced before. We're gonna face it together."

More than 4,000 crew members went ashore last month. While more than 2,000 are back on board, at least 1,000 are still testing positive for the virus and remain on land. And the close to 700 crew members who had been protecting and running the Roosevelt and systems aboard have now moved into hotels and other facilities on the island for their quarantine.

When it's time to return to the ship, boarding takes place in slow, meticulous waves. Wearing gloves and masks, the crew members climb onto sterile buses only after they've had two negative tests for the virus. They are screened and checked when they get on the bus and again before they board the ship. And even a simple sniffle can get them turned back.

PRESUMPTIVE

From Page 1

and contact investigation has started, according to a statement last night from the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force and the Commonwealth Healthcare Corp.

Further evaluation is being obtained from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to make a final case determination.

"This PUI is being closely monitored by the CHCC medical team. CHCC has already initiated contact tracing for the most immediate contacts (close family members, friends, and associates) of the PUI," the statement said.

Besides this presumptive positive case, over 1,000 other individuals have tested negative for COVID-19 at the drive-thru mass testing at the Saipan airport since April 28.

According to the CHCC website, a total of 1,480 have gotten tested at the Saipan airport. In a separate TV interview with CHCC chief executive officer Esther Muña, she said that, as of May 4, a total of 1,022 individuals have tested negative for COVID-19. Additionally, there are 313 specimens that are pending. There was no immediate explanation for the discrepancy.

Muña stated that once an individual has tested positive for the virus, they will immediately go into isolation at the Alternative Care Site at Kanoa Resort. "We're doing the community-based testing to figure out if there's somebody out there that's not reporting to the hospital," said Muña.

For anyone who does have symptoms, Muña recommends that they should call the Commonwealth Health Center first to make sure that they are aware that the affected person will be going to the hospital. Upon arrival, CHC will "process" them as a patient.

Luckily, Muña said that they haven't seen anyone who has come forward to say that they think they have COVID-19. "Having the community-based testing is helpful for us to find out what's out there in the community," she added.

According to Muña, passengers who are coming into Saipan from Guam cannot be exempted from the quarantine under any circumstances. That is, unless the passenger(s) have tested negative within the last 72 hours.

As the passengers arrive on Saipan, they have the option to stay in quarantine at the Pacific Islands Club Saipan in San Antonio for 14 days or get tested and wait for the results at PIC.

Muña said that they are still required to enroll in CHCC's monitoring system for 14 days. The monitoring system records and keeps track of how an individual is doing and if they are experiencing any COVID-19-like symptoms.

"Going back to comparing a [Federal Drug Administration] equipment to a non-FDA equipment, at the end of the day, the process itself ends at the hands of the pathologist," said Muña. "The doctor that says, 'Yes this test is valid,' these results are valid and signs off on it."

Muna said it's important to be mindful that the people who are involved are all professionals, and they're doing this the right way and doing what is acceptable.

Additionally, some passengers who flew in on May 2 already had documents that they have been tested within the last 72 hours with negative results. Some still got tested once they arrived on island, and four passengers decided to stay for the mandatory 14-day quarantine.

Plans are also in place for Rota and Tinian to begin their community-based testing.

A longer version of this story is available at www. saipantribune.com

PHASES

From Page 1

"We are for the gradual reopening of our economy as we are also concerned for everyone's health and safety," Chamber president Velma Palacios said.

She acknowledged that business leaders affiliated with the Saipan Chamber of Commerce, Northern Marianas Business Alliance Corp., and Hotel Association of the Northern Mariana Islands have begun preliminary discussions about steps needed to reopen the economy. "The hope is to present a plan to the Office of the Governor on a multi-step approach that will promote safety and economic activity," she added.

No measure will be taken without Torres' approval of course, Palacios said. "It should be important to note we are a long way from 'normal.' Until we have an approved community-based plan, businesses will continue to follow social distancing and follow prescribed guidelines in the governor's executive order," she said.

At the Fiscal Response Summit and representing the business sector, Palacios was joined in the online summit by Chamber vice president Joseph C. Guerrero, along with other leaders of business-centric agencies and non-profit organizations. "The summit required in-depth deliberations regarding government expenditures, revenue, allocations, and financing. We all know the ripping effects of government operations across our community, especially the private sector, so there was a great deal of 'give-and-take,'" Palacios said.

"But we hope the end product will put us on a better path moving forward, to assist in the recovery. Additionally, in response to the governor's call to action in reopening the economy in phases, the Chamber, together with NMBAC and HANMI, have convened to discuss plans for this multi-phase approach," Palacios added.

She assured that the business community is grateful for the governor and the COVID-19 Task Force's continued work in keeping the CNMI community safe.

'We cannot allow the casino industry to fail'

By IVA MAURIN
iva_maurin@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

"The casino industry must not fail."

Former House speaker Rafael S. Demapan made the pronouncement Monday at the House of Representatives chamber, during the public hearing for the appointment of the new members of the Commonwealth Casino Commission for the Third Senatorial District, of which he is a nominee.

"We cannot allow this industry to fail," he said, responding to a question Rep. Tina Sablan (Ind-Saipan) posed for all the nominees on up to what circumstances would Imperial Pacific International (CNMI) LLC be allowed to violate any CNMI rules for the CNMI to revoke its casino license or bid out the license to other companies.

IPI is the lone casino licensee in the CNMI, and CCC commissioners have the power to revoke its license, should it be found to be in violation of federal and CNMI laws.

"Would IPI have to stop paying their taxes completely for a year, would they just stop construction, how bad can the violations have to get before we consider a revocation being justified and perhaps the license being bid out or multiple licenses being considered?" Sablan asked.

Demapan, who described the issue as "very complex," pointed out that what the CCC needs to do is to emphasize compliance and not just focus on regulating policy.

"When you see deficiency, it's important that we talk to them, make sure that they're in compliance so that it is easier for all of us," he said.

Former CCC executive director Edward C. Deleon Guerrero, also a nominee, echoed that the issue is very complex, and suggested that the commission, in such a case, will issue a complaint, and then based on regulations, issue the licensee 15 days to correct the deficiencies.

"An example of this is when they [IPI] were late on the license agreement. We immediately [started] investigations to determine if the payment has actually been paid, and then we found a claim. Had they not paid that, most likely the next move, the condition will be to suspend the license until they comply with the order," he added.

Another nominee, former Zoning board chair Mariano Taitano, said it would be difficult for him to support the revocation of the license agreement, "given the fact and the magnitude of investment this company has done on our island[s]. Revocation is kind of strong for me to support."

"I would rather work with them that they comply with the Casino License Agreement, ensure that they comply and they thrive and contribute to our economy. …Work with them and see what enforcement we need to have them comply with, to support the business to help the entire Commonwealth," he added.

Sablan later described the three nominees' responses as "troubling."

CCC is the government's casino gaming regulatory agency that oversees the activities of IPI, the exclusive casino licensee operating on Saipan.

From right, former House of Representatives speaker Rafael S. Demapan, former Zoning board chair Mariano Taitano, and former Commonwealth Casino Commission executive director Edward C. Deleon Guerrero speak at the public hearing of the Saipan and Northern Islands Legislative Delegation's Committee on Judiciary and Governmental Operations last Monday at the House chamber on Capital Hill.
IVA MAURIN

'Without casino, Retirement Fund would've been gone five years ago'

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Juan M. Sablan, the outgoing chairman of the Commonwealth Casino Commission, left the panel last Thursday with parting words that credits the casino licensee in the CNMI with the continued survival of the NMI Retirement Fund and its reincarnation as the Settlement Fund.

Sablan

At the CCC board meeting last week that was done via video conference, Sablan said the NMI Retirement or the Settlement Fund would have been gone five years ago without the Imperial Pacific International (CNMI) LLC's casino.

On the last day of his term as CCC chairman, Sablan said he initially opposed the operation of a casino on Saipan, as proposed at that time by the Fitial administration. It was only later that he realized the potential revenue of the casino that will help the retirees and the CNMI economy.

He said it was this that sustained the Settlement Fund and he urged IPI to continue operating the casino. "We don't want you to die," said Sablan as he thanked IPI "for bearing with us."

He said IPI is very fortunate to be on the island.

With the CCC as the regulatory arm of the casino, Sablan said it hurts him when he hears allegations of corruption involving the casino operation. He stressed that his goal since the very start was to ensure that the sole licensee, IPI, is in compliance with Public Laws 18-56 and 19-24 and other applicable laws and regulations.

Sablan said he is grateful to the late governor Eloy S. Inos for entrusting him the important task as a commissioner and that he is even more thankful to Gov. Ralph DLG Torres for his support throughout the years.

In September last year, U.S. District Court for the NMI designated Judge Frances Tydingco-Gatewood recalled that the status of the Retirement Fund was scary and devastating to the retirees six years ago.

"It's a miracle we've survived this far," the judge had said.

At the same CCC Thursday meeting, then-commissioner Alvaro A. Santos stated that he shares the sentiments of his colleagues, Sablan and Joe C. Reyes. Santos thanked IPI and all CCC staff for helping him during his term.

Then-commissioner Joe Reyes said he wished he could have done better in his term. "If I stepped on toes, my apology," he said, without elaborating. He thanked other commissioners, all CCC staff, and CCC legal counsel Mike Ernest, and expressed hope that the incoming commissioners will be successful.

Later, the commissioners voted for Ramon M. Dela Cruz of Tinian to serve as an interim chairman effective last Friday. The commissioners also chose Diego M. Songao of Rota to serve as interim secretary effective last Friday, and CCC audit manager Charlie O. Atalig as acting executive director effective last Monday.

CCC held the election as the terms of Sablan, Reyes, and Santos, all representing Saipan, expired last Thursday. Dela Cruz and Songao have four more years to serve.

To replace them, Torres nominated CCC executive director Edward C. Deleon Guerrero, former House speaker Rafael S. Demapan, and former Zoning Board chair Mariano Taitano

The Saipan and Northern Islands Legislative Delegation conducted a public hearing last Monday for the confirmation of the three nominees. The appointment requires the advice and consent of the SNILD. If confirmed, Demapan, Taitano, and Deleon Guerrero will serve a four-year term, which will expire in April 2024.

PACIFIC ISLANDS CLUB SAIPAN

We are seeking for high energy individuals
with a positive, can do attitude.
Pacific Islands Club, Saipan is inviting qualified, U.S.
workers to apply for the following positions:

CHEF DE CUISINE

Experience in preparing multi-ethnic cuisine is required. Must be able to work weekends, holidays and flexible shifts.
CLOSING DATE: May 7, 2020

COMPUTER SUPPORT SPECIALIST

Bachelor's Degree in Computer Science. 24 months working in hospitality preferred.Able to work weekends, holidays and flexible shifts.
CLOSING DATE: May 7, 2020

Applications must be received by 5:00pm on Thursday, May 7th, 2020.
PIC applications are available at the PIC Security Desk by the Loading Dock/Employee Entrance. Incomplete applications will NOT be accepted or considered.
PIC is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

NORTHERN MARIANAS COLLEGE
PUBLIC NOTICE

The U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA) is considering a request for Federal assistance from Northern Marianas College (NMC) to construct two on-campus facilities in Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI). Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), EDA is conducting an assessment of the potential of the proposed project to affect the environment and/or historic properties.

The project involves construction of two new facilities on the northeast corner of the NMC campus in As Terlaje, Saipan:

The Workforce Development and Training Center would consist of a 3-story building with about 20,200 square feet of floor space and a building footprint of approximately 65 feet by 105 feet, housing classrooms, laboratories, and faculty offices.

The Center for Research, Extension, and Development would consist of a 2-story building with about 25,000 square feet of floor space and a building footprint of approximately 80 feet by 160 feet, housing laboratories, a multi-purpose room, and administrative and program offices.

Project information is available for review via e-mail request by contacting Mr. William Torres at william.torres@marianas.edu or Ms. Patricia Coleman at patricia.coleman@marianas.edu

If you have any information regarding potential impacts environmental resources or historic properties associated with this proposed project, please provide it in writing to:

Regional Environmental Officer
US Department of Commerce
Economic Development Administration
915 Second Avenue, Room 1890
Seattle, WA 98174
rdimmick@eda.gov

Comments received in the EDA Regional Office by 5:00 pm Pacific Time on May 21, 2020 will be considered. A copy of the NEPA/NHPA decisional document will be available upon request at the above EDA Regional Office.

PSS receives over $2M to develop advance data system

By KIMBERLY A. BAUTISTA
kimberly_bautista@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Public School System has received a $2 million-plus grant from the State Longitudinal Data Systems to create an infrastructure that will link PSS data to early learning and the child care program that will give a complete look at the CNMI's educational system from pre-school all the way to high school.

During Board of Education's regular board meeting last week, Lynette Villagomez, PSS associate commissioner of Accountability, reported that PSS was awarded $2.7 million to develop a Longitudinal Data System, "which will provide funding to create an infrastructure for data linking from early learning and we can also link the child care program to PSS data. It basically provides the infrastructure. It will also provide funding for training and other activities that will support our stakeholders in using data for informed decisions, both in the classroom level as well as the district level," she said.

Villagomez said this is a first for the CNMI to receive this grant, which is a highly competitive grant by the Institution of Education Sciences and the U.S. Department of Education to establish a State-Wide Longitudinal Data System, or SLDS.

Villagomez said the grant is good for four years and since the funding is already available to PSS, they are moving forward with the project.

The PSS project, "Advance CNMI: Leveraging Data Power for Greater Success," will be implemented in phases to set the foundation for a sophisticated information system that drives data usage to support decision-making at multiple levels from classroom instruction to district policies.

The two primary goals of the project are to establish an infrastructure by connecting K-12 Longitudinal Data Systems with Head Start and Early Head Start SLDS and to shift the use of data from compliance to accountability and strategic instructional usage.

Achieving these two objectives will take four years, beginning this year and through 2024. The long-term goal is to establish an SLDS infrastructure for the CNMI and to move the use of data beyond the isolated reporting for compliance to an integrated system driven by accountability and focused on enhancing student learning.

The first year will focus on hiring the key personnel and establishing the SLDS infrastructure.

Years 2 through 4 will concentrate on creating the data architecture and system design, establishing a stakeholder engagement plan, sustainability plan, and training.

After Year 4, efforts will focus on linking the data systems with postsecondary institutions—Northern Marianas College and Northern Marianas Technical Institute—and workforce departments' Department of Labor, Public Health, the Workforce Investment Agency, etc. This will allow the CNMI to use integrated data to make data-informed decisions for future research and planning.

The SLDS will be a central hub of student data where research-based queries can be made by stakeholders to draw out quantitative insights that can be used to tailor instructional approaches, inform community partners about at-risk populations, guide leaders in the creation of policies, and ultimately narrow achievement gaps.

DoD helps through COVID-19 mission in CNMI

By IVA MAURIN
iva_maurin@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Preparations are underway to strengthen the capability of Kanoa Resort in Susupe as an alternate care site with help from the seven-member team of the Task Force-West, led by Col. Voris McBurnette, brigade commander of the U.S. Army Pacific Support Unit.

The primary purpose of the visit is to refine the planning details for the potential arrival of a larger contingent of U.S. Department of Defense forces to staff and augment the Commonwealth Healthcare Corp.'s medical capability at the CNMI's Alternate Care Site at Kanoa Resort, in support of the Commonwealth's COVID-19 response.

According to DoD public affairs specialist Brad Ruszala, the team's visit is a follow on from the initial visit made by Brig. Gen. Tracy L. (Artero) Smith, deputy commander, Task Force-West and commander of the 18th Medical Command.

McBurnette serves as the chief of staff for Task Force-West commander Rear Ad. John Menoni, and brigade commander, U.S. Army Pacific-Support Unit.

"The unit is the principal medical operations headquarters in the Pacific, strengthening the security and stability of our nation through trusted synchronization of Army Health System support by, with, and through joint and combined partners," Ruszala said. "As for timeframes, DoD is postured to provide medical support and supplies to civil authorities, including the government of the CNMI, if and when authorized by the lead federal agency, Federal Emergency Management Agency, through the United States Indo-Pacific Command tasking as part of the Defense Support to Civil Authorities mission."

Ruszala further added that the 18th Medical Command (Deployment Support) provides mission command, administrative assistance, and technical supervision of assigned and attached medical units within the Indo-Asia Pacific Region.

Register for NMC summer session

The Northern Marianas College is inviting new and current students to enroll in its summer session so they can earn additional credits toward their degree and accelerate their path to graduation. The summer session includes business, education, math, nursing, and science courses Those who have not applied for admission can still do so by visiting www.marianas.edu and scheduling a live video or phone chat with an adviser from the Office of Admissions and Records. Interested new and current students have until Friday, June 26, 2020 to enroll. The 2020 summer session will run from June 22, 2020 until Aug. 1, 2020. Students who were enrolled during the fall 2020 and/or spring 2020 semester are considered ongoing students, so there is no need to re-apply for admission. Federal financial aid is also available for the summer session. Those who have already submitted a 2019-2020 FAFSA application do not need to reapply or re-submit a FAFSA application for the summer semester. New students will need to submit a 2019-2020 FAFSA form by June 5, 2020. NMC's school code is 015746. To verify eligibility for Pell Grants, applicants can contact the NMC Financial Aid Office through email at fao@marianas.edu. ***(PR)***

DETAIL TINIAN U.S. NAVY/ENGINEERING AIDE 2ND CLASS YOHANES NUGUSE

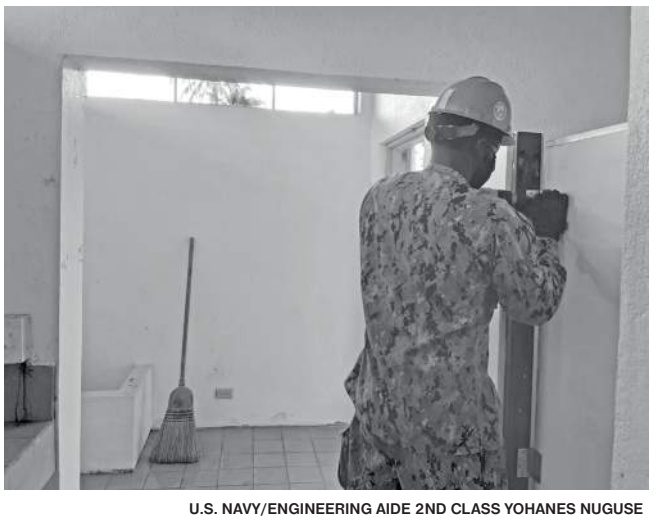
Construction Mechanic 1st Class Joshua Hobelman, assigned to Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 5's Detail Tinian, loads a dump truck using and skid steer for a local children's park on Tinian.

U.S. NAVY/ENGINEERING AIDE 2ND CLASS YOHANES NUGUSE

Equipment Operator Constructionman Cameron Cook, assigned to Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 5's Detail Tinian, operates a 120M Caterpillar Motor Grader to grade Tinian's expeditionary camp site to prepare for the construction of Southwest Asian huts.

U.S. NAVY/ENGINEERING AIDE 2ND CLASS YOHANES NUGUSE

Construction Mechanic 1st Class Joshua Hobelman, assigned to Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 5's Detail Tinian, cleans debris left by a typhoon that hit Tinian in 2018 using a skid steer.



U.S. NAVY/ENGINEERING AIDE 2ND CLASS YOHANES NUGUSE

Culinary Specialists 3rd Class Nathaniel Jones, assigned to Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 5's Detail Tinian, hangs restroom stall doors to revitalize a children's park on Tinian.

U.S. NAVY/ENGINEERING AIDE 2ND CLASS YOHANES NUGUSE

Engineering Aide 3rd Class Hunter Sylvester, assigned to Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 5's Detail Tinian, cleans a restroom using a power washer as part of an effort to revitalize a children's park on Tinian.

Army retiree mag features Tinian JROTC cadet article

After reviewing samples of her work, cadet Capt. Dea Patio of the Tinian High School's Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps was chosen by the U.S. Army Cadet Command to write an article for the *Army Echoes* magazine, the U.S. Army's newsletter for retired soldiers, surviving spouses and their families.

Patio

A dedicated cadet, Patio has been part of the Tinian JROTC program for the past three years and is the current Stallion Battalion public affairs officer, or S5. Her article for the magazine, which was published in April, discussed the impact of the U.S. Army JROTC program on her community, school, and herself.

"It was not difficult [to think] of how the program has positively impacted the community of Tinian, my school, and myself…," said Patio when asked for her thoughts about writing the article. "This program has done so much for me and I tried my best to elaborate on how much JROTC taught me and helped shape me into the person I am today."

This wasn't the first time for Patio to represent the Stallion Battalion and the CNMI as a whole with her writing. Her previous articles, such as the Field of Heroes article that was posted on the U.S. Army JROTC website, highlighted her writing talent and was not only the first article from the Stallion Battalion to be featured on the U.S. Army JROTC Cadet Command website, but also the first article from any battalion in the CNMI to be posted there. She has had several other works, such as the Health Field Day article as well as the ongoing series about Tinian JROTC alumni—both of which are available on the Tinian Stallion Battalion website and Facebook page. Her Army Echoes article was also due to be posted on the website once it was released last month.

Being chosen out of hundreds of cadets across America, Patio recognizes the significance of this opportunity. "When I was told the news from Captain Santos, I was over the moon. It is truly an honor to be able to represent JROTC and the Stallion Battalion."***(Samantha Sandbergen)***

THINGS TO KNOW

As of May 5, 2020. All information may change without prior notice. For corrections and additions to this list, send an email to editor@saipantribune.com or call 235-6397 or 235-2440.

USDA outlines telehealth service changes

The U.S. Department of Agriculture issues a summary of key service changes to increase the use of telehealth in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. These measures include allowing rural health clinics and federally qualified health centers to serve as "distant site" providers, increasing the types of services that the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services can deliver via telehealth, and allowing certain telehealth services to be delivered to Medicare recipients by phone. For details, go to https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/USDARD/bulletins/289d418.

USDA RD takes steps to help

USDA Rural Development has taken a number of immediate actions to help rural residents, businesses and communities affected by the COVID-19 outbreak. Rural Development will keep our customers, partners, and stakeholders continuously updated as more actions are taken to better serve rural America. Visit www.rd.usda.gov/coronavirus for more information. Or go to https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/USDARD/bulletins/2894700.

SBA Fact Sheet

The U.S. Small Business Administration has issued a "Fact Sheet for the CNMI" about the Paycheck Protection Program and Economic Injury Disaster Loans. Read it by clicking on the link at www.saipantribune.com.

Commerce Department in operation

The CNMI Department of Commerce will continue to provide services to the CNMI business community via means of teleworking.

For direct support and services, the CNMI is advised to contact the support team via the department's website at info@commerce.gov.mp and indicate the attention to the respective division or section for the appropriate services. See DOC advisory at the link at www.saipantribune.com.

FBI alert vs online scams

FBI has issued an alert to the public to be on the lookout for scams that exploit the current COVID-19 pandemic. See FBI advisory at the link on www.saipantribune.com.

Process for mass testing

Mass testing for COVID-19 is ongoing at the Saipan International Airport. The test is free. People interested in being tested for COVID-19 can request for an appointment for specimen collection on the Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. website at https://chcc.gov.mp/covid19testing.php or over the phone through the COVID-19 Info Line. For more information, see link at www.saipantribune.com.

VOX POPULI

A message to our teachers

By CHEVY ALIPIO
alipiochevykate@gmail.com
REPORTER

May 4-8, 2020, is national Teacher Appreciation Week. Here are these students' messages to their teachers

"Happy Teacher Appreciation Week to all of you PSS and Hopwood teachers! Thank you for guiding us as students to help achieve our goals and dreams. Thank you for constantly encouraging us. Thank you for making a difference in every student's life. Thank you for being there even though you all are going through a tough time. We couldn't thank you enough for being the best teachers you all could possibly be! We are all Hilitai Strong!"

—Jiro Motenejo, Chalan Kanoa

"To all my teachers who had me as a student, I would like to say thank you for the time and effort you gave me and my classmates every day. Thank you for listening, helping, teaching, and also being a friend. Thank you for giving me the motivation to accomplish my future goals in life. Continue to inspire other students, I appreciate everything you've done for us!"

—Sheena Varias, San Antonio

"Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, we have many things to be grateful for and that includes our teacher! I would like to thank teachers because of their efforts in providing us with the education and foundation that we as students long for. At these times, teachers have not only gone out their way to give us love, care, and support, but have done that… virtually. As a student, I [want] to thank these educators because, without them, I would not have gained the stability and fruitful knowledge to become a well-rounded individual. Stay strong, teachers, for your pupils are supporting you, just as how you've always supported us.

—Kalea Borja, Kagman

"Thank you for everything you've done for your students. We can't thank you enough for all you do to provide us the best education we need. Although things have been really rough, we will always stand by your side. You all continue to inspire and motivate us every day to help us succeed in life. You all changed our lives in many ways that we'll cherish forever. Thank you for constantly encouraging us and guiding us to achieve our goals in life. Thank you for always being there for us no matter what. We miss you teachers, happy Teacher's Appreciation Week!"

— Daphne Cruzana, DanDan

"Thank you for never giving up on us even when times are tough. I had so many teachers that acted as role models to me and I can't thank them enough. To all my past mentors, thank you for never leaving me behind. And to all the teachers out there, thank you for working so hard to make the future of the CNMI educated!"

—Christian Bravo, Chinatown

"Despite the whole controversy between PSS and the government and the COVID-19 situation, the love and appreciation I have for my teachers will never change. The challenges they face while still being able to work and keep in touch with their students inspires me. I even consider some to be my second mom or dad. This situation made me realize how much I actually miss seeing them and sitting in their classrooms. I am grateful for all the countless hours you put into lesson planning, teaching, grading, coaching, chaperoning, counseling, and many more! Your hard work and dedication toward the school system will never be left unnoticed."

—Charlene Danganan, San Jose

"Even before this pandemic, I was fortunate and blessed to be given such enthusiastic and passionate instructors. I cannot commend them enough for what they do. They have helped and guided me so much that new opportunities opened up for me. Through this pandemic, they've stayed passionate in class and try their best to engage, interact, and most importantly, check up on us. And for all of that, I am forever grateful and appreciative of all teachers that work tirelessly for us students. We love you, happy Teacher Appreciation Week!"

—John Delos Reyes, Chalan Kanoa

"We often forget what important roles teachers play in our lives. We may not realize it but teachers impact our lives more than we could ever imagine. Without them, we would not be standing at where we are today. They don't just educate us, but they also teach us valuable life lessons. I would like to show my gratitude to all teachers and everything they have done for me and my fellow classmates. I want to remind them though this difficult time [that] we still love and think of them. We are grateful for their efforts, happy Teacher Appreciation Week!"

—Davean Gonzales, Gualo Rai

"Our teachers do so much more for us than we think. They spend countless hours and efforts for our growth, not just as students but as people. They are patient and hardworking, sometimes sacrificing sleep and even their own needs to put us, students, first. They are selfless and considerate, doing everything in their power to incorporate even just one student's thoughts and feelings. They are caring and compassionate, for it takes the kindness out of one's heart to teach. They are strong, because even in times of hardship, they are still there to guide us. They do all these things, yet we sometimes forget to acknowledge all that they do. So, to every teacher, from every student, we thank you from the bottom of our hearts. We appreciate you! Happy Teachers' Appreciation Week!"

—Jobelle Tabuena, DanDan

"The influence of a great teacher can never be erased. They work hard to educate us and to help us become better individuals. They are our cheerleaders who want nothing more than to see us succeed. It is unfortunate that teachers are overlooked, overworked, and underpaid, despite greatly contributing into shaping the future leaders of tomorrow. I think without the amazing teachers that I have had throughout my academic journey, I would not have been the person that I am today. To my incredible teachers, thank you for inspiring me to pursue my dreams and to believe in myself. To students, be kind to your teachers, they only want what is best for you. Teachers are extraordinary human beings and I hope the passion to teach and to spread knowledge will live forever."

—Kyla Tuazon, San Antonio

"Appreciating your teachers is just as important as learning. Just like students, we tend to forget they have their trials and are human beings like us. Regardless of their age or gender, everyone is going through their own battles. Yet they still do their best to show up every day. A little 'thank you' or 'how are you' can go a long way. Everyone needs a little love here and there."

—Raina Avelino, Gualo Rai

Opinion

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The Associated Press | Pacific Islands News Association

EDITORIAL

Widespread testing won't help end the pandemic if it's inaccurate

A surge of new coronavirus antibody tests, some of them used in studies that appear to show a far greater rate of infection and recovery than we'd imagined, has set the world to dreaming.

Maybe so many people have been infected that the actual fatality rate from COVID-19 is too low to justify closing down so much of our day-to-day lives. Or maybe a positive antibody test could be used as a kind of "passport" to work and normal life, since that person theoretically couldn't be sickened and couldn't pass the virus on to others. Or better yet, maybe we are nearing herd immunity, in which high numbers of immune people keep the disease from sickening the population at large, enabling the public to be set free from their homes.

For now, sorry to say, those are just dreams.

Unlike the diagnostic "PCR" tests that measure whether someone has contracted COVID-19, antibody tests look at a body's immune system for evidence that an individual has been exposed to and defeated the disease. The nation is awash in more than 120 antibody tests for the novel coronavirus that were approved by the Food and Drug Administration without requiring the usual verification of accuracy. The agency was attempting to get the tests out quickly and avoid a repeat of the unconscionable delays in producing the PCR tests, which remain in too short supply.

But having plenty of tests won't help if they're inaccurate, and some of the antibody tests have unacceptably high rates of false positives. Such mistakes give people the dangerous belief that they're safe from the disease and an even more dangerous belief that they can't infect others. Those who show up at a medical office for antibody testing are unlikely to know exactly which test they're being given and what its accuracy rate is.

Even with very accurate tests, the presence of antibodies doesn't necessarily mean immunity; too little is known about the resistance that antibodies provide to reinfection. If that immunity exists, it's also unclear how long it will last.

The studies that purportedly showed that vastly more people have been infected _ such as one conducted by Stanford University that concluded the number of infected residents in Santa Clara County, Calif., was 50 to 85 times what had been reported so far _ have come under criticisms for alleged shortcomings in their methodology. It's not easy to find a random sample of people for antibody testing; Stanford recruited via social media, and the people who volunteered might be skewed toward those who had suffered COVID-19-like symptoms or who knew they had been exposed. The results also were released before the study had been peer-reviewed, which is happening a lot these days because of the pressure to learn more about this new virus.

See WIDESPREAD on Next Page

Resist the urge to jump on every new COVID-19 theory

By DAVID WEILL
Chicago Tribune

Dr. David Weill is principal and founder of the Weill Consulting Group, a biomedical consulting firm. He is the former director of the Center for Advanced Lung Diseases and the Lung and Heart-Lung Transplant Program at Stanford University Medical Center.

Each morning during these most unusual of times, I find an inbox filled with messages from both my medical colleagues and well-informed laypeople attaching articles or links to webpages referencing the latest "breakthroughs" in the fight against the coronavirus.

Hydroxychloroquine is the cure. Young people don't get COVID-19. Patients who take an angiotensin-converting enzyme inhibitor, or ACEI, a common drug to treat hypertension, are more susceptible. People with asthma don't get it. Or do get it.

Here's one that I must admit is my favorite. The makers of Lysol emphatically state that the product should not be injected or ingested to "clean" the lungs, a headline says without apparent irony, affirming what should be fairly obvious. But there may be a different standard for "obvious" now.

All of this makes me think that we have entered the "silly season" of the pandemic, characterized by fast science, science that doesn't get peer-reviewed. Clickable science.

Call it what you want, but I call it dangerous science. Welcome to the new era of Science on the Fly, where the data can be right, or wrong, misleading or even harmful, but routinely reported with only minimal or incomplete evidence.

In a world starved for news about the coronavirus we are supposing that if we just keep spreading information about it, then things will be all right. But we have confused information with knowledge, which, under normal circumstances, would only be annoying or distracting but now could negatively affect people's health beyond that of the viral effects.

So what are we to do when we are bombarded—on the television, internet and newspapers—with a constant dose of medical "findings?"

As consumers of this avalanche of information, we need to be skeptical, circumspect about what we are being told. I learned skepticism in medical school, and I haven't forgotten it. We were taught to use our common sense, described by one of my medical school professors as a sense not commonly had.

He was on to something, I think especially now. In confronting a new headline, one that screams something works, or doesn't, we would do well to have as a first reaction, I doubt that's true.

If we think hydroxychloroquine is the answer, then the medication flies out of the pharmacies, hoarded by folks preparing for the apocalypse, and unavailable to people who actually need it, for diseases like malaria and lupus in which efficacy has been proved. If someone stops taking an ACEI and their hypertension gets out of control, they may suffer a stroke or heart attack.

The current environment, in some ways, harks back to when I was in medical school and residency, when HIV had emerged. Remember when we read in the newspapers back then that one could get AIDS from a doorknob, or only if one was Haitian, or homosexual, that heterosexuals were protected from this new "gay cancer?"

None of that turned out to be true and it seems likely—no, probable—that our early coronavirus information will be equally untrue and may enhance, not diminish, the anxiety we all feel about this crisis. But one significant difference from then to now is how quickly we receive information—how it spread in the late '80s and early '90s might as well have been by pony express compared with today's warped speed dissemination, which has no regard to whether something is true or untrue but primarily whether attention grabbing or not.

As a medical doctor, I have some ability to separate out the wheat from the chaff, as the saying goes. So when reading something about any medically related topic, I first think to myself, I doubt it, then work my way toward acceptance from that starting point.

Right now, we have a beast to feed, fostered by a partnership among an information-starved public, a media that knows it has our captive attention and medical scientists who want to provide new information and, yes, wouldn't be opposed to publishing novel findings to enhance their careers.

So what should we do? First, take a deep breath. The practice of medicine has always had an element of uncertainty and necessitated an acceptance that we may not know everything we want to know at that moment. We should be comfortable with risk, especially the risk that we will need to act with an imperfect data set, especially as we make tentative steps toward coming out of our houses and reopening society.

The science will come, and it is our only way out of this. And it will emerge in the quiet moments in scientists' laboratories or by statisticians' careful calculations. It will not come as a blaring headline on a news webpage or, dare I say, from a briefing room podium.

So next time you see a new treatment being touted or a finding about for whom among us the virus has a predilection, say a simple phrase to yourself: I doubt that's true.

Saipan doing well with COVID-19 infections

By DON HARDT
Special to the Saipan Tribune

Don Hardt, O.D., C.D.E., of Hardt Eye Clinic & Diabetes Education Center, is an eye doctor and Certified Diabetes Educator on Saipan. He writes a blog called saipan-diabetesblog.com, where this article was originally published. Contact him at hardteyeclinic.com.

Compared to the rest of the world, Saipan and the CNMI are faring quite well. COVID-19 testing levels here are higher, while disease rates and death rates are lower than most other parts of the world. As I have previously blogged, Saipan is especially vulnerable to COVID-19 complications, as they occur at much higher rates in those with diabetes. Since Saipan has one of the highest rates of diabetes in the world, we need to be especially careful here. In the following paragraphs I will outline how the CNMI compares to other parts of the world in terms of COVID-19 testing rates, rates of disease, and of course death.

COVID-19 testing

So far the CNMI has tested 1,480 people for COVID-19 infection. Directly comparing this to other parts of the world can be difficult. Most studies will list findings in testing per million population. Maybe my epidemiology skills just aren't strong enough, but I have trouble picturing what a gathering of a million people would look like. I can, however, easily picture 1,000 people. Therefore, most of the numbers I discuss will be in cases per thousand population. As the estimate of our CNMI population is 56,682, doing the math tells us we have done 26 COVID tests for every thousand people living here.

Most countries have done far less than this. I will list a few below, again this per thousand people.

1.	CNMI	26
2.	Italy	34
3.	USA	21
4.	Turkey	12
5.	South Korea	12
6.	India	4
7.	California	1.9
8.	Japan	1.4
9.	Philippines	1.0

Only a handful of countries have done more testing per capita than the CNMI. These include Iceland, Estonia, and Italy.

Another interesting comparison is to other U.S. territories. Guam has done comparatively well, but lags behind the CNMI. In order of the number of tests per thousand population.

1.	CNMI	26
2.	Guam	19
3.	US Virgin Islands	10
4.	American Samoa	1
5.	Puerto Rico	0.4

The CNMI has done more COVID-19 testing per person than almost everywhere else in the world. Guam is not too far behind, but the CNMI has tested 26 times more than American Samoa, 13 times more than California, and 60 times more than Puerto Rico.

I consider the level of testing done in the CNMI thus far to be quite remarkable. We should all be very proud of our first responders, the leadership of the Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. as well as the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force. They had very limited resources to work with and clearly maximized them. This accomplishment is even more extraordinary when you consider that other parts of the world all had a significant head start. Our first COVID-19 case was announced on March 28. The U.S. as a whole had its first case in early January. Many, many other countries had a very slow start to their testing. Not the CNMI. It is also important to consider that the Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, and Guam are much wealthier than the CNMI.

COVID-19 prevalence

So far 14 people have been diagnosed with COVID-19 in the CNMI. This is less than one person per thousand (0.25). About 1 of every 4,000 people in the CNMI has been diagnosed. Most parts of the world are much worse than this, here is a partial listing of cases per thousand population.

1.	CNMI	0.25
2.	Spain	5.3
3.	USA	3.7
4.	Italy	3.5
5.	Great Britain	2.8
6.	South Korea	0.21
7.	Japan	0.12

From the above you can see that most major countries in Europe as well as the United States have between 15 to 20 times more cases per thousand than the CNMI. Among major countries, only South Korea (barely) and Japan have a lower prevalence than Saipan.

Now a comparison to other U.S. territories: COVID-19 cases per thousand population.

1.	CNMI	0.25
2.	Puerto Rico	0.60
3.	Virgin Islands	0.62
4.	Guam	0.89
5.	American Samoa	No cases yet

In other words, the other territories have 2.5 to 3.5 times more cases per thousand than us in the CNMI.

Deaths from COVID-19

So far two people have died from COVID-19 infection in the CNMI. With so few cases, statistical analysis is difficult, and even one more case can dramatically change the numbers. I will list a few anyway. Two deaths in the CNMI is equivalent to 1 in 28,000 or 0.04. Because the numbers are so small I will use deaths per 100,00 for comparison purposes. Below is a listing: Deaths per one hundred thousand population

1.	CNMI	3.5
2.	Guam	3.6
3.	Spain	54
4.	Italy	48
5.	Great Britain	43
6.	United States	21
7.	South Korea	0.5
8.	Japan	0.4

Most countries have a death rate from COVID-19 between 7 and 17 times higher than the CNMI. Guam and Saipan are very similar to each other, while South Korea and Japan have extraordinarily low death rates compared to virtually anywhere else.

Overall, these findings have been highly reassuring to me. Of course great caution and care is still needed; things could easily get worse. I had feared it would be far worse at this point. I will encourage my friends at CHCC and the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force to keep up the good work. What has been accomplished so far with testing is simply amazing.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Kudos to Dr. Ada

Public school education is clearly the bailiwick of Education Commissioner Dr. Alfred Ada. Kudos to him for his clear, precise and articulate passion about the purpose and function of public school education. As a principal of a small, relatively new, private school in the CNMI, I, along with other private school staff, am proud to partner with PSS in formulating the formal learning activities of NMI youth. In any learning activity whatsoever, what is learned is a private experience. Perhaps each learning event is private.

John B. Joyner
Principal, Northern Marianas International School

WIDESPREAD

From Page 8

But even if that many people had been infected, and even if they had immunity as a result, and even if that immunity could be counted on to last at least several months _ we're piling up the "ifs" here _ we'd still be woefully short of what's needed for herd immunity. Saying "50 to 85 times more" sounds like most of the population. In fact, that would add up to, at most, a little more than 4% of Santa Clara County.

And even if COVID-19 has a significantly lower fatality rate than originally thought, that doesn't mean it couldn't kill a lot of people. Given that the virus is easily spread through casual contact and there are no known treatments, if there is no broad-based social distancing, a fatality rate of less than 1% could still exact a horrendous toll.

Antibody tests could still play an important role in understanding the spread of COVID-19. But as with so many aspects of the disease, more attention to science and verification are needed. The FDA needs to figure out which tests are worthy of approval and which aren't, and then allow only the former on the market. More robust studies using those tests are needed to give us a better idea how widespread the infections have been, and those are coming. Indiana is planning one that will involve 20,000 people, with special attention paid to obtaining a more random selection of participants.

And unfortunately, we'll have to wait to find out more about the role of antibodies in preventing future infection, and, we hope, to obtain an effective vaccine from the more than 80 under development. That's our best chance at herd immunity. Yes, science and government need to move quickly against a fast-moving virus, but speed isn't a substitute for reliable information.

(c) 2020 *Los Angeles Times*

What does a socially distanced summer even look like?

By MARIEL GARZA
Los Angeles Times

Mariel Garza is a member of the Los Angeles Times *editorial board.*

Dr. Deborah Birx, the White House's coronavirus response coordinator, said Sunday on NBC's "Meet the Press" that social distancing would probably continue through the summer.

I know what you're thinking, because I had the same initial thought: There's no way I can stand four more months of this lockdown.

But that's not what Birx meant, at least I think and hope not. A socially distanced summer doesn't mean we continue to remain hunkered down in our homes until September, except for the occasional run to the grocery store. If we did, there wouldn't be much of a society or economy to rejoin when we emerged in the fall.

What it means is that as we relax some of the strictest pandemic restrictions in the coming weeks, we will keep some measures in place to protect ourselves from a virus that will continue to be a threat for the foreseeable future.

What that looks like will necessarily vary by state, by region, by city and by person.

Some people who are at particular risk from COVID-19 may not want to leave the house until there's a vaccine. The rest of us need to prepare ourselves for a strange and low-key summer with no concerts, fairs or events with large gatherings of people. And nightclubs and bars? Don't count on it.

Retail and grocery stores may well continue to limit the number of people they allow inside and ask that patrons wear face coverings, possibly through the rest of the year, if not longer. Service industries will adopt new rules to limit contact between providers and clients once they are allowed to reopen.

When we go back to work at the office or warehouse, if we go back, many of those places will look and feel different, with new rules about interactions like handshakes, spaced-out work areas and staggered work schedules.

Temperature checks may be required for entry into public buildings and spaces.

For many reasons, the current state of stay-at-home measures can't continue for months on end. It was appropriate at the time for California and other states to adopt early, extreme measures to address a new and relatively unknown viral infection for which we were colossally unprepared. And those measures appear to have succeeded in suppressing a steep spike in sickness and death. More people have died from COVID-19 in the U.S. than in any other nation, but it could have been much worse.

But people will simply not put up with being locked up inside much longer, with no clue how and when they will be released, even if that's the safest option. The crowds at Orange County beaches over this past warm weekend indicate that some people have already reached that point.

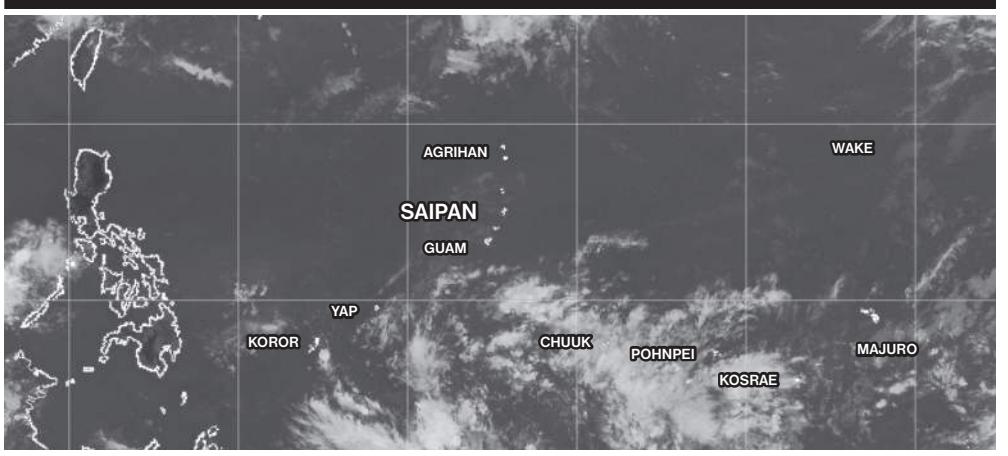
State and local officials have to figure out and communicate—and soon—a clear path out of quarantine that's safe and coordinated, and one that allows people access to outside spaces. (And definitely not in the disorganized or politically motivated manner that we have seen in a few states. Looking at you, Georgia.) Otherwise, the public is bound to revolt.

The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN

TODAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
Partly sunny with isolated showers. East winds 10 to 20 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated light showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated light showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated light showers.	Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.
88° 77°	90° 78°	90° 78°	88° 78°	89° 78°

YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE



PICTURE TIME: 6:21 AM, TUESDAY, MAY 5, 2020

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Satellite shows a weak trade-wind disturbance moving through the Marianas with scattered showers. Moderate trades continue, along with 4-6 ft seas.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

NMI CRIME STOPPERS

Anonymous tips can now be submitted through the following:
- Call 234-7272 (PARA) on any telephone
- *11 on any IT&E cellular phone
- Log on to the internet at www.nmicrimestoppers.net

FLIGHT SCHEDULE

DEPARTURES				ARRIVALS			
SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)				**GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN**			
UA117	9:15am	9:55am	1, 4, 6	UA174	7:30am	8:11am	1, 4, 6

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

MICRONESIA	▲ ▼ °F	
Guam and Rota	Partly Cloudy	89° / 79°
Palau	Thunderstorms	85° / 78°
Yap	Thunderstorms	85° / 79°
Chuuk	Thunderstorms	86° / 81°
Pohnpei	Thunderstorms	83° / 79°
Kosrae	Thunderstorms	83° / 79°
Majuro	Thunderstorms	85° / 79°

AROUND THE GLOBE	▲ ▼ °F	
Auckland	Partly Cloudy	64° / 55°
Beijing	Showers	63° / 54°
Hong Kong	Partly Cloudy	84° / 77°
Honolulu	Mostly Sunny	83° / 70°
London	Sunny	64° / 45°
Los Angeles	Partly Cloudy	91° / 68°
Manila	Partly Cloudy	95° / 82°
Melbourne	Mostly Sunny	63° / 48°
Miami	Sunny	84° / 73°
New York	Showers	68° / 46°
Osaka	Partly Cloudy	66° / 48°
Paris	Sunny	70° / 52°
Busan	Mostly Sunny	66° / 48°
Rome	Sunny	70° / 48°
Salem	Partly Cloudy	81° / 52°
San Francisco	Mostly Sunny	62° / 51°
Seoul	Sunny	66° / 39°
Tokyo	Rain	64° / 48°
Washington, DC	Showers	53° / 39°

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	5:51 AM	6:35 PM
Thursday	5:51 AM	6:36 PM
Friday	5:50 AM	6:36 PM
Saturday	5:50 AM	6:36 PM
Sunday	5:49 AM	6:37 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	-	4:44 AM	5:26 PM
Thursday	-	5:31 AM	6:27 PM
Friday	-	6:21 AM	7:30 PM
Saturday	-	7:13 AM	8:33 PM
Sunday	-	8:08 AM	9:34 PM

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY	FEET	
12:19 AM	HIGH TIDE	0.54
6:23 AM	LOW TIDE	2.17
1:01 PM	HIGH TIDE	0.19
7:16 PM	LOW TIDE	2.06

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COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

GOVERNMENT RESOURCE LISTING AS OF APRIL 16, 2020

Commonwealth Utilities Corporation
- ***Cashier & Customer Service***
  Monday - Friday
  8:00 AM - 1:00 PM
  Tel: (670) 664-4282
  Pay bills online at www.cucgov.org or via phone by calling toll free 1-(855)-729-2282

Department of Finance
- ***Division of Revenue & Taxation***
  CASHIER ONLY
  Monday - Friday
  7:30 AM - 4:30 PM
  Tel: (670) 664-1000
- ***Division of Customs Services***
  - ***Airport:*** OPEN DAILY
    8:00 AM - 5:00 PM
  - ***Seaport:*** Monday - Friday
    8:00 AM - 5:00 PM
  - ***Chalan Kanoa Post Office:***
    Monday - Friday 7:30 AM - 4:30 PM
    Saturday 7:30 AM - 11:30 AM

Department of Public Lands
- CASHIER ONLY
  Monday - Thursday
  9:00 AM - 11:00 AM
  Tel: (670) 234-3751/52/53/54

Saipan Zoning Office
- *Available via phone only*
  Monday - Thursday
  7:30 AM - 11:30 AM
  Tel: (670) 234-9661/2/3
  Email: yubert.alepuyo@zoning.gov.mp
  Call or email for more information

Department of Public Works
- ***Solid Waste Management Division***
  - ***Lower Base Transfer Station & Marpi Landfill***
    Open all week except Wednesday
    7:30 AM - 1:00 PM
    Tel: (670) 322-2745

CNMI State Medicaid Agency
- Eligibility staff via phone only
  Tuesday - Thursday from 8:00 AM - 12:00 PM
  Tel: (670) 664-4880/4882
  Accepting applications and supporting documents via drop-box at Medicaid Office. Medicaid application & renewal/ redetermination forms must be original. Applications/forms available for pick up next to the drop-box or online at: www.medicaid.cnmi.mp

Office of Vocational Rehabilitation
- *Available via phone or email only on Mondays, Wednesdays, & Fridays from*
  9:00 AM - 1:00 PM
  Tel: (670) 322-6537/38
  Email: maryann@ovrgov.net

Office of the Attorney General
- ***Civil & Criminal Divisions***
  Monday - Friday
  8:00 AM - 12:00 PM
  Tel: (670) 237-7500/7600

Office of the Public Defender
- Monday - Friday
  9:00 AM - 3:00 PM
  Tel: (670) 234-6503

SOCIAL DISTANCING TO BE IMPLEMENTED AT ALL OFFICES

GOVERNOR'S COVID-19 TASK FORCE HOTLINE TEL: (670) 287-0046
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COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

GOVERNMENT RESOURCE LISTING AS OF APRIL 16, 2020

Department of Community and Cultural Affairs

- ***Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)***
  Accepting Calls From Existing Customers Only
  Tel: (670) 287-1475
- ***Division of Youth Services (DYS) On-Call***
  Saipan: (670) 285-2780 / 287-2781 / 287-1773
  Tinian: (670) 287-3268
  Rota: (670) 287-2553
- ***Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF)***
  For inquiries regarding parent eligibility requirements for CCDF Program:
  Tel: (670) 783-8571 / (670) 783-8572
  Email: dccajguerrero@gmail.com / ccdf.jrosario@gmail.com
- ***Commonwealth Council for Arts and Culture (CCAC)***
  For Recovery Arts Grant Application Submissions. Grant Guidelines are available at http://www.cnmiartscouncil.org
  Tel.: (670) 287-4585
  Email: parkeryobei@gmail.com
- ***Historic Preservation Office (HPO)***
  For Processing of Federal 106 Consultations Call
  Tel: (670) 789-1986
  Email: rchong.cnmihpo@gmail.com
- ***Nutrition Assistance Program (NAP)***
  Benefit Pick Up: Monday - Friday
  8:00 AM - 3:00 PM

  Application Pick Up: Monday - Friday
  8:00 AM - 6:00 PM

  Application Submission:
  Anytime via Drop-Box

  Application Inquiries:
  Tel: (670) 237-2801/2802

  To download the NAP application and other forms go to dcca.gov.mp
  Email: support@cnminap.gov.mp

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Business

Monster Pizza continues to serve fusion pizzas

By BEA CABRERA
beacabrerasaipan@gmail.com
CORRESPONDENT

Monster Pizza Pub located in Garapan is one of many businesses that did not close when the quasi-lockdown was implemented in the CNMI. They pressed on and currently their regular menu includes different kinds of pizzas with unique ingredients—a combination of local and Korean-style flavors.

"We never closed as we were open from Monday to Sunday 12noon to 6pm and for weekends from 11am to pm with last order at 5:45pm. At the start of the pandemic, management and all employees discussed if we should close or open the restaurant," owner Shuyun "Grace" Jo said.

"We all decided that instead of closing, we should prepare masks, alcohol spray, hand sanitizer, and gloves and continue to service the community with their favorite pizzas. We give importance to social distancing and we now operate on take-out only," Jo added.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Monster Pizza Pub opened in Garapan in 2018 and is open from Monday to Friday at 12 noon to 6pm and weekends from 11am to 6pm.

For the whole month of May, Monster Pizza Pub is giving away one free Monster Iced Tea for every order of big-size pizza and two free Monster Iced Tea for every order of super-size pizza.

For take-out or delivery orders, call (670) 233-9999. For more information, visit their Facebook page: Monster Pizza Pub.

Their bestseller pizzas include Beef Bulgogi Pizza, Hawaiian Monster Pizza, and Spicy Chicken Garlic Pizza and according to Jo, these favorites can be picked up at the restaurant or delivered fresh to your home.

"To help people who want to order our food but do not want to go out in public for health and safety reasons, we understand them and reach out to them instead through our delivery services. We are flexible and can deliver anywhere pn Saipan for minimum fee depending on the location or distance," she said.

Delivery charge in Garapan is only $3, from Garapan to Susupe is only $5, Chalan Kanoa, Dandan, San Vicente, and San Antonio is only $8. and Koblerville, Kagman, and St. Lourdes is $10.

For take-out or delivery orders, call (670) 233-9999. For more information, visit their Facebook page: Monster Pizza Pub.

You can order one flavor or two flavors in one pizza. This is half Spicy Chicken Garlic Pizza and Margarita.

A combination of Beef Bulgogi Pizza and Hawaiian Monster Pizza.

Treasury says April-June borrowing will be a record $2.99T

WASHINGTON (AP)—The economic paralysis triggered by the coronavirus pandemic is forcing the U.S. Treasury to borrow far more than it ever has before—$2.99 trillion in the current quarter alone.

The amount is more than five times the government's previous record borrowing for a quarter, $569 billion, set in the depths of the 2008 financial crisis. It also dwarfs the $1.28 trillion the government borrowed in the bond market for all of 2019.

The Treasury Department said the huge sum is needed to pay for nearly $3 trillion in rescue aid that the government has unleashed in programs to support tens of millions of jobless workers and shuttered businesses with direct payments and loans.

"Borrowing needs are skyrocketing as Treasury needs cash to fund stimulus measures and to compensate for a plunge in revenues caused by massive job losses," said Nancy Vanden Houten, an economist at Oxford Economics.

In addition, the government needs to borrow to cover the shortfall in revenue that will occur because the Trump administration has delayed the deadline for tax payments this year from April to June.

The Congressional Budget Office is forecasting that the government will run a record deficit of $3.7 trillion this year, far above the $1 trillion-plus annual deficits recorded from 2009 through 2012 when the government was fighting the 2008 financial crisis and a deep downturn that followed.

The deficits would be even higher but the Federal Reserve has cut its benchmark short-term interest rate to a record low near zero and is buying trillions of dollars in government bonds and mortgage-backed securities to push long-term interest rates, which were already at record lows, even lower.

Private economists believe that the government has little choice but to spend the money now to prevent an even worse downturn and possibly even a situation like the Great Depression of the 1930s.

Under the plans the Treasury unveiled on Monday, the government will borrow $4.48 trillion this budget year including a projected $677 billion in borrowing in the July-September quarter. The budget year ends on Sept. 30.

In a stark demonstration of how the government's financial situation has changed, three months ago before the coronavirus outbreak caused widespread shutdowns in the United States, Treasury was projecting that it would be able to pay down $56 billion in debt during the quarter.

CBO is projecting the U.S. economy will shrink by a record 40% at an annual rate in the current April-June quarter.

Meatpackers cautiously reopen plants amid coronavirus fears

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP)—A South Dakota pork processing plant took its first steps toward reopening Monday after being shuttered for over two weeks because of a coronavirus outbreak that infected more than 800 employees.

Employees reporting for work in Smithfield Foods' ground pork department filed through a tent where they were screened for fever and other signs of COVID-19. Some said they felt the measures Smithfield has taken would protect them from another virus outbreak, while others were not confident that infections could be halted in a crowded plant.

Lydia Toby said she was "kind of worried" as she entered the plant before 6 a.m. for her first shift in over two weeks. Managers met employees in her department Friday and explained they had installed dividers on the production line and would require everyone to wear masks.

"I think it's going to be OK," Toby said.

In the wake of an executive order from President Donald Trump ordering meat plants to remain open, Arkansas-based Tyson Foods was also resuming "limited production" Monday at its pork plant in Logansport, Indiana, where nearly 900 employees tested positive. And the JBS pork plant in Worthington, Minnesota—just an hour east of Smithfield's South Dakota plant—planned a partial reopening on Wednesday.

Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden on Monday called meatpacking plants—along with nursing homes—"the most dangerous places there are right now." He called for greater protections for meatpacking workers, as well as a $13-an-hour pay premium.

"They designate them as essential workers and then treat them as disposable," Biden said, on a conference call about protecting essential workers, such as meatpacking workers, that was organized by the League of United Latin American Citizens.

Virginia-based Smithfield is offering COVID-19 testing to all employees and their family members, according to a text message sent to employees. The message told employees to report to a local high school to be tested. Gov. Kristi Noem said employees aren't required to undergo tests before returning to work, though it's strongly encouraged. Noem's health commissioner, Kim Malsam-Rysdon, said it was Smithfield's decision to make the tests optional.

Smithfield didn't respond to requests for comment.

About 250 employees were told to report to work on Monday, according to the union that represents them. The plant employs about 3,700 workers and produces roughly 5% of the nation's pork.

Salaheldin Ahmed, who works in a department that has not yet reopened, said he was called in by plant management to look at changes.

"They fixed a lot of things," he said, describing how workers would be spread apart where possible.

A Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report Friday said more than 4,900 workers at meat and poultry processing facilities have been diagnosed with the coronavirus, including 20 who died. Not all states provided data.

The CDC researchers cited risks including difficulties with physical distancing and hygiene, and crowded living and transportation conditions. They suggested enhanced disinfection and that workers get regular screening for the virus, more space from co-workers and training materials in their native languages. Many meatpacking employees are immigrants; a CDC report on the Smithfield outbreak found that employees there spoke about 40 different languages.

Nation

American public space, rebooted: What might it feel like?

AP

In this April 2, 2020, file photo, caution tape surrounds the playground at Country Side Community Park in Elk Grove, Calif.

And the American people returned to the American streets, bit by bit, place by place. And in the spaces they shared, they found a world that appeared much the same but was, in many ways, different—and changing by the day.

And the people were at turns uncertain, fearful, angry, determined. As they looked to their institutions to set the tone, they wondered: What would this new world be like?

The choppy re-engagement of Americans with public life over the past week, with more to come as cries to "reopen the country" grow, means a return to a shared realm where institutions of all types form the shape of American life.

Yet can you reopen a society—particularly a republic built on openness and public interaction—without its physical institutions at full capacity, without public spaces available for congregation?

"Humans are just terrified of other humans right now. They just don't feel confident about each other," says Daniel Cusick, a New York architect who has worked on public spaces for three decades. "But people need a structure. They need to be told there's something greater."

Enter the "institution," a word with multiple personalities—some truly public, some partially public, some purely commercial. All figure in this mid-virus re-engagement. All are part of the web of public trust, and all have a tone to set.

"Institution" means government buildings—post offices and courthouses and DMVs. It means town squares and public parks, churches and nursing homes and college campuses and, of course, hospitals.

It can also mean skyscraper lobbies, shopping malls, hotels, big-box stores and supermarkets—the touch points of a consumer society whose open, public operation means a society is edging toward normal.

Eric Martin, a Bucknell University associate professor of management who studies disaster responses, cites an established place like Katz's, the crowded New York deli made famous in "When Harry Met Sally." How businesses like that act, he says, will speak volumes.

"It doesn't change quickly. It's been around forever. That's what it means to be an institution. And so we allow these places a legitimacy that we might not with other places," Martin says.

"We think those are legitimate organizations. So if they're doing it, if they're changing, we say, 'Oh, this is real,'" he says.

Something else unites these places. In each, the woman on the next bench, the man ahead in the checkout line, the family down the pew are suddenly potential vectors—or potential victims. So we're assessing the public realm in the way we assess a salad bar when we walk into a restaurant.

That can impede a free society's functions in ways not yet fathomed.

"Democracy depends to a surprising extent on the availability of physical, public space, even in our allegedly digital world," John R. Parkinson writes in "Democracy and Public Space: The Physical Sites of Democratic Performance."

The digital world has kept many institutions going in the United States since mid-March. It has allowed an approximation of office life to continue. It has, along with a robust supply chain, brought to our doors some of the goods we usually go and get.

But those same functions, paired with unease, could work against the return to public spaces.

"Technology is reshaping what it means to be in a public place," says John R. Stilgoe, a historian and landscape expert at Harvard who has spent his career exploring and chronicling the landscapes where Americans move around.

"How do you define the 'public realm' when an enormous percentage of the American public spends the majority of its day in its pajamas?" Stilgoe says.

Already, there are hints of what institutions and the spaces they occupy could look like. If even some come to pass, they could alter Americans' relationship with the public realm. ***(AP)***

Despite violent arrest, NYPD to maintain distancing patrols

NEW YORK (AP)—New York City's mayor on Monday defended the use of police to enforce social distancing, rejecting calls from watchdogs to end the practice after an officer with a costly history of alleged misconduct was caught on video pulling a stun gun on a man and violently taking him to the ground.

Mayor Bill de Blasio called Saturday's confrontation in Manhattan's East Village "very troubling" and "absolutely unacceptable," but contended it was an outlier among "tens of thousands of interactions between police officers and civilians over the last weeks that went very well."

The officer, Francisco Garcia, was stripped of his gun and badge and placed on desk duty pending an internal investigation. Over the years, he's been named as a defendant in six lawsuits that the city settled for a total of $182,500, according to court records and a Legal Aid Society database.

In a similar case, Garcia and other officers allegedly threw a man to the ground and then punched and kicked him. In another, Garcia was accused of throwing a woman against a metal grate and onto a sidewalk and using a homophobic slur after she asked for his badge number.

The police department assigned 1,000 officers to social distancing patrols as New Yorkers ventured outside to enjoy the warmest weekend of a spring clouded by the coronavirus pandemic. They'll also be part of a new effort to distribute 7.5 million protective face masks over the next few weeks.

"You can't do effective enforcement without the NYPD and the NYPD is more than up to the job," de Blasio said.

Bystander video showed Garcia – in plainclothes but no mask -- slapping 33-year-old Donni Wright in the face, punching him in the shoulder and dragging him to a sidewalk after leveling him in a crosswalk near a public housing complex.

Police spokeswoman Sgt. Mary Frances O'Donnell said Wright "took a fighting stance against the officer" when he was ordered to disperse. Minutes before that, officers arrested two other people on the same block for allegedly failing to comply when asked to move along.

Officers recovered a stun gun that may have belonged to one of the people, a small amount of marijuana and close to $3,000 in cash, Police Commissioner Dermot Shea said.

"Exactly what was going on there is still somewhat under investigation," he said.

Joo-Hyun Kang, of the police watchdog Communities United for Police Reform, said the clash made clear: "Public health professionals and community organizations, not the NYPD, should be responsible for educating New Yorkers about the importance of social distancing and creating new norms."

Tina Luongo, a lawyer with the Legal Aid Society, said the city needs to "seriously reconsider social distancing enforcement that leads to escalations involving the use of tasers and violent assaults."

Background checks for firearms remain high amid pandemic

The number of April background checks to purchase a firearm showed Americans flocking to gun stores in high numbers for the second month in a row amid worries about the coronavirus pandemic.

The FBI numbers were released Monday with anticipation since March smashed previous records with 3.7 million checks conducted. While the numbers leveled off a bit to about 2.9 million checks for last month, one week—April 13-19—is now among the top 10 highest weeks since the system was tracked in November 1998. That week in April alone, the FBI conducted 766,739 checks.

Background checks are the key barometer of gun sales, but the FBI's monthly figures also incorporate checks for firearm permits that are required in some states. Each background check also could be for the sale of more than one gun.

According to figures released by the National Shooting Sports Foundation, which represents gunmakers, the number of checks adjusted to not include those conducted for permits was more than 1.67 million for this April, 70% higher than April 2019.

As fears over the pandemic began ramping up and states began issuing stay-at-home directives, long lines were seen snaking outside of some gun dealers and shelves inside emptied of ammunition. It's played out amid a debate over whether gun shops should be considered "essential" businesses that should remain open. Fears gun shops would be closed and that economic downturns would lead to high crime and safety concerns have helped fuel the run on firearms.

The pandemic has also inflamed tensions between gun-control supporters and Second Amendment advocates. Pro-gun groups have said the sales of firearms underscore that Americans ardently support the Second Amendment. In contrast, gun control activists have said the gun lobby is fueling fears to increase profits and that more firearms in circulation will lead to increases in gun violence.

Gun sales are likely also propelled by the historic highs that occur during presidential election years as gun owners worry that a new crop of elected officials will lead to gun control measures.

So far, more than 12 million background checks have been conducted since the beginning of this year.

April's figures came after eye-popping statistics from March when the FBI data showed five of the top 10 days ever for background checks. That included the day with the most, March 20, when more than 210,000 checks were conducted.

Five of the top 10 weeks ever for checks have occurred since mid-February, including the week with the most, March 16-22, when nearly 1.2 million checks were done. ***(AP)***

Asia

Report: China hid virus' severity to hoard supplies

WASHINGTON (AP)—U.S. officials believe China covered up the extent of the coronavirus outbreak—and how contagious the disease is—to stock up on medical supplies needed to respond to it, intelligence documents show.

Chinese leaders "intentionally concealed the severity" of the pandemic from the world in early January, according to a four-page Department of Homeland Security intelligence report dated May 1 and obtained by The Associated Press. The revelation comes as the Trump administration has intensified its criticism of China, with Secretary of State Mike Pompeo saying Sunday that that country was responsible for the spread of disease and must be held accountable.

The sharper rhetoric coincides with administration critics saying the government's response to the virus was slow and inadequate. President Donald Trump's political opponents have accused him of lashing out at China, a geopolitical foe but critical U.S. trade partner, in an attempt to deflect criticism at home.

Not classified but marked "for official use only," the DHS analysis states that, while downplaying the severity of the coronavirus, China increased imports and decreased exports of medical supplies. It attempted to cover up doing so by "denying there were export restrictions and obfuscating and delaying provision of its trade data," the analysis states.

AP

In this April 29, 2020, file photo Secretary of State Mike Pompeo speaks at a news conference at the State Department in Washington.

The report also says China held off informing the World Health Organization that the coronavirus "was a contagion" for much of January so it could order medical supplies from abroad—and that its imports of face masks and surgical gowns and gloves increased sharply.

Those conclusions are based on the 95% probability that China's changes in imports and export behavior were not within normal range, according to the report.

China informed the WHO of the outbreak on Dec. 31. It contacted the U.S. Centers for Disease Control on Jan. 3 and publicly identified the pathogen as a novel coronavirus on Jan. 8.

Chinese officials muffled doctors who warned about the virus early on and repeatedly downplayed the threat of the outbreak. However, many of the Chinese government's missteps appear to have been due to bureaucratic hurdles, tight controls on information and officials hesitant to report bad news. There is no public evidence to suggest it was an intentional plot to buy up the world's medical supplies.

India's virus lockdown eased while infection rate speeds up

NEW DELHI (AP)—India relaxed some coronavirus lockdown restrictions on Monday even as the pace of infection picked up and reopenings drew crowds of people.

The near-total 5-week lockdown on India's 1.3 billion population achieved a slowdown in the spread of the virus but has caused immense hardship for India's legions of poor people, who could neither stay in cities without work nor travel to their home villages and waited in line daily for hot meals. Some degree of lockdown will continue at least until May 18.

A tentative return to normal life, albeit with masks, social distancing and stringent hygiene standards, resumed in low-risk areas with few or no cases, while constraints on movement and work continued elsewhere in the country. In New Delhi, a designated hot spot where many lockdown restrictions remained, construction workers, Uber drivers and self-employed people such as housekeepers returned to work.

During the lockdown, only businesses deemed essential, such as grocery stores, banks and pharmacies, were open. The sale of alcohol was banned. But on Monday, a broader array of business was permitted. More than 100 people, not all observing social distancing norms, stood in line to enter a liquor store.

At another liquor store in Old Delhi, a usually highly congested area around the Mughal-era Red Fort, about 200 would-be shoppers pushed and shoved each other to enter. Police wielded their bamboo batons to break up the crowd.

Neeraj Mehta went to a liquor store in East Delhi, but the crowd scared him off. "The government should just keep the liquor shops shut if such crowds are going to gather," he said.

Migrant workers who fled Indian cities en masse when the lockdown took effect March 25, only to become stranded on the road and quarantined by state governments, were traveling by special rail service to their home villages. The Railways said it would charge a highly subsidized rate, but opposition political leader Sonia Gandhi said the Congress party would cover the cost.

"Thousands of migrant workers and laborers were forced to walk home several hundred kilometers on foot without food, without medicines, without money, without transportation, without anything but the desire to return to their families and loved ones," Gandhi said in a statement.

Still, the infection rate was growing at 5.5% compared to 4.7% two day ago, according to the Brookings Institution think tank.

"Active cases now growing at 5.5%, so doubling every 13 days. Not good. Hotspot management (containment and contact tracing and testing) needs to be much better," tweeted Shamika Ravi, a Brookings Institution fellow.

World

Italy lets millions back to work

ROME (AP)—Italy started stirring Monday, with millions allowed back to work as Europe's longest coronavirus lockdown started easing, while the U.S. took halting steps to lift some restrictions even as tens of thousands of new cases were reported daily.

In Washington, the Senate convened for the first time since March. The Supreme Court heard arguments by telephone and allowed the world to listen in live—for the first time ever.

Dozens in Florida waited before sunrise for the 7 a.m. opening of Clearwater Beach. And a shuttered pork processing plant in South Dakota took its first steps toward reopening after more than 800 employees were infected with the coronavirus.

In Louisiana, state lawmakers were restarting their legislature—but feuded over whether they should return at all.

Political battles have become increasingly embedded in U.S. coronavirus policy. Republican Louisiana legislators irritated by Democratic Gov. John Bel Edwards' decision to extend the state's stay-at-home order through May 15 were eager to return to work.

Democrats saw things differently: "It could be a devastating blow to the strides made and to the safety of our residents, our staff and members if we returned to business as usual prematurely," Democratic leaders wrote in a letter.

The moves to open U.S. states came even as the country's one-day death toll stood at 1,313 with more than 25,500 confirmed new infections, according to a Sunday count by Johns Hopkins University. The real numbers are likely significantly higher.

Governments around the world have reported 3.5 million infections and more than 253,000 deaths as of Monday, including more than 68,000 dead in the United States, according to Johns Hopkins University. Deliberately concealed outbreaks, low testing rates and the severe strain the disease has placed on health care systems mean the true scale of the pandemic is undoubtedly much greater.

With pressure growing in many countries for more measures to restart the economy, politicians were trying to boost funding for research into a vaccine for COVID-19. There are hopes one could be available in months, but many scientists warn it could take much longer.

Developing a vaccine will be the key to returning to less restricted everyday life. On Monday, an alliance of world leaders hosted by the European Union held a virtual summit on vaccine research, pledging to give 7.4 billion euros ($8 billion).

The U.S., along with Russia, was notably absent.

The leaders of France, Germany, Italy, Norway and top European Union officials said that money raised will be channeled mostly through recognized global health organizations.

French president Emmanuel Macron, who donated 500 million euros on behalf of France, noted that the U.S. was currently "on the sidelines," but said he had discussed the issue with President Donald Trump and was convinced the U.S. would at some point join the initiative.

Italy, the first European country hit by the pandemic and a nation with one of the world's highest death tolls, began opening up cautiously after its two-month shutdown—allowing 4.4 million Italians to return to work.

Traffic in downtown Rome picked up, construction sites and manufacturing operations resumed, parks reopened and flower vendors returned to the Campo dei Fiori market for the first time since March 11.

In fight over Brazil leader's virus test, crisis looms

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP)—Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro says he twice tested negative for the coronavirus but many, including a federal judge, are demanding he share the actual results. Still, the leader has refused.

The surreal standoff is the latest flashpoint in a broader battle between a president who has repeatedly tested the limits of his power and democratic institutions. There are concerns that as Bolsonaro pushes back, it could spark a constitutional crisis.

Bolsonaro has consistently downplayed the coronavirus pandemic and has fiercely criticized efforts by governors and mayors to impose measures to control the virus' spread, instead advocating for most people to get back to work.

But the courts have repeatedly curtailed him—on this issue and others: They ruled that governors and mayors have the power to determine shutdown measures. They overturned the president's decree allowing religious gatherings and are trying to force the release of his COVID-19 test results to put to rest speculation he may have lied. They struck down his pick for federal police director and on Saturday suspended his decision to expel 30 Venezuelan diplomats from the country.

Bolsonaro's supporters have denounced the decisions as part of a plot to derail his presidency, and the president himself says he is a victim of meddling by obstructionist judges.

"Enough with the interference. We're not going to allow any more interference!" Bolsonaro said on Sunday. "Patience has run out. We're going to take Brazil forward."

Analysts say the court decisions impose constraints on a populist who is testing democratic guardrails and has shown he is not afraid to take his legal battles to the street when he is unhappy with the courts.

Bolsonaro and his base have frequently lambasted the courts when they limit his power. They have decried, for instance, one justice's recent decision to block the nomination of a new chief of the federal police, seen by many as too close to the Bolsonaro family.

Even some critics, including former President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, believe the Supreme Court overstepped in that instance.

The highest court also approved the opening of an investigation into whether the appointment constituted illegal political interference.

The fight over his coronavirus test results has produced a particularly unusual chapter. Concerns about Bolsonaro's health began in March, when the president returned from the U.S., and local media reported in the weeks that followed that more than a dozen members of his delegation tested positive for the coronavirus.

Initial unconfirmed reports indicated Bolsonaro had tested positive himself but then he announced on social media his results had come back negative. He has refused to produce the actual document, citing medical privacy.

Good Housekeeping

(DREAMSTIME/TNS)
The age of social distancing has proved to be remarkably social.

Tips for your next virtual happy hour or party

By JESSICA ROY
LOS ANGELES TIMES

We have all suddenly and somewhat unwillingly been ushered into the age of the social video call.

Yes, we've all been on a few video conferences for work here and there—a necessary evil of remote teams and global businesses. But this is the first time we've all found ourselves celebrating birthdays, baby showers, engagements and even weddings with our friends and family compacted into boxes on a screen. The ink was barely dry on the shutdown orders last month before people started organizing happy hours, game nights, book clubs, watch parties, brunches and other gatherings online.

The age of social distancing has proved to be remarkably social. But there's a bit of a learning curve to using video conferencing, even if you've done it for work before. The etiquette and expectations are a little different when you're just vibing with your friends—but they still exist.

There's a lot of overlap between pro tips for using Zoom, Skype or Google Hangouts for work and with your friends. (Full disclosure: Times owner Dr. Patrick Soon-Shiong is an investor in Zoom.)

If you've never joined or set up a video call before, our ultimate guide to hanging out with your friends online has instructions. Once you're ready to attain the next level of video-conferencing capabilities, come back here.

Using your laptop is better than your phone. You'll quickly discover that holding a phone up at face height for an extended period of time is no fun. The video and sound quality tend to be lower coming from your phone. Also, if you have your laptop set up on a table in front of you, it's easier to eat and drink. It also makes it feel a little more natural if you need to get up—like you're just pushing your chair back from the table at a dinner party instead of making everyone else stare at your ceiling as your phone sits face-up while you refill your drink.

With Zoom, gallery view is better than speaker video. With speaker video, the person who's making the most noise is a big picture, while everyone else is in a little bar at the side or along the top. Speaker view makes sense when you're watching a work presentation but feels less natural in a group setting. Sometimes, more than one person is talking, or some other noise prompts the camera to switch over, like sirens outside or a dog barking. Gallery view gives you the "Brady Bunch"-style grid where you're all in the same sized window. To change which view you're seeing, go to the top right of the screen and click "Gallery View."

Muting yourself still applies. In a get-together with a couple of other friends, sure, leave yourself unmuted. But when five or more people are joining the video call, it's polite to mute yourself when you aren't speaking. Laptop and phone microphones pick up sound differently than our ears do. What sounds to you like the normal hustle and bustle of making dinner in the background while you listen to your friends talk might be a magnified banging and clashing to them.

To look your best, put your laptop on a stack of books and check your background before you go live. I covered this in my complete guide to working from home, but it all still applies here. Put your laptop on top of a stack of books so the camera is at about eye level while you're sitting down. Otherwise, you risk incurring the dreaded down-facing double chin.

Your friends are going to care less about what your house looks like than your boss might, but it's still good to tidy up before guests come over, even if they're only in attendance virtually.

"In a sense we've all become set designers," said Mark Marino, who says he'd used Zoom a handful of times before coronavirus but now uses it regularly in his job as a professor who teaches writing at USC.

Just double-check that people aren't staring at a mountain of dirty laundry or empty cans before you click "join meeting." An alternative: Queue up some good virtual backgrounds.

Be the host with the most.

If you're hosting the meeting with Zoom, you'll need to upgrade to a Pro account or have to restart the meeting every 40 minutes when the free version runs out. Google Hangouts and Skype don't set time limits. Try to start your gatherings on time so people aren't left hanging on the hold screen.

Also, if you're setting it up, plan some games that take advantage of the technology instead of trying to work around it. For more on that, keep reading.

OK, we're on the call. Now what?

Social events via video conference require a bit more planning and finesse than a casual hang.

Plan things to do other things than just talking.

In a normal party setting, you'd split off and have side conversations among a few people and migrate around to different groups. Here, you have to keep a conversation going among everyone at once. That's challenging. If you're hosting, it might be more helpful to set an agenda so people know what to expect: "We'll chat from 6 to 6:30ish, then I was thinking we could (play some games / do a scavenger hunt / watch the new season of "Nailed It!" on Netflix / work on our separate crafting projects simultaneously.)"

We have a ton of ideas for that in our ultimate online hangout guide. A few to get your started: Jackbox games, virtual card and board games on Playingcards.io, or tabletop RPGs—either standbys like Dungeons and Dragons, or ones designed specifically to be played virtually, like the #ZoomJam games Mark Marino's students have been challenged to make. Party classics like Charades, Pictionary and Bingo are easily transferable to a video call.

Another idea: Be apart, together.

Pull out your Nintendo Switches and play Animal Crossing (the ultimate game for this moment in history) at the same time. Do crafts or a DIY project. You don't have to be actively engaging with one another the entire time to feel together. Jennifer Peepas, who writes the advice blog Captain Awkward, called it "parallel socializing." She and her friends have logged onto Zoom to knit together.

Scavenger hunts can take advantage of your separate locations and be a fun opportunity to move around a bit. The host names an object and everyone else has a certain amount of time (say, 30 seconds) to find it in their own house. A coffee mug with writing on it. A twist tie. A sock in a color other than white. A roll of toilet paper. (Credit where credit is due: I first heard of this idea on Twitter and vowed to steal it. Mission accomplished.)

Powerpoint Parties take advantage of digital screen-sharing technology. Everyone prepares a short presentation on a topic they're enthusiastic about, whether it's sourdough discard recipes or obscure unsolved mysteries or reality TV contestants. Then you take turns sharing.

Know when to say good night.

You aren't the only person who feels totally worn out by these. A video call requires you to be "on" and maintaining conversation and eye contact in a way you don't have to if you're all meeting up at a bar. Marino likened the psychic exhaustion to "encountering a dementor in Harry Potter"—it's just a weird, soul-sucking experience. And the fact that you can see your own face all the time is frankly perturbing. Feel free to have a sticky note on hand to keep yourself out of your line of sight.

So don't plan an all-nighter. The general rule of thumb is that the more people on the call, the shorter it should be. I have found that the one-hour-to-90-minute range tends to be the sweet spot for most online gatherings that involve more than one or two other people.

Excusing yourself from the call can be a little tricky. Most of the reasons we give to leave a social situation no longer apply. You don't need to beat traffic. You don't have to get home to let the dog out. You probably don't have somewhere else you need to be (though more and more people are finding themselves double-booked for Zoom hangouts these days).

"Just say, 'it's time for me to take off,' 'time for me to go,' that's it," said Lizzie Post, the president of the Emily Post Institute. She said to resist the urge to pretend you're having technical difficulties or the WiFi is going out. Your friends will get it and probably be relieved to have an excuse to say, "You know, I'm gonna get going too."

"Most people are going through waves of being in weird headspace of wanting to connect or not wanting to connect or needing to get things done," Post said. "Have confidence saying things like, 'Hey, guys, I'm gonna take off, it's been really fun chatting with you all, see you soon."

Peepas, the Captain Awkward advice writer, said if you don't feel comfortable being that assertive, use some outside help: an oven timer.

"If you're trying to keep in touch with people, you do want to talk to them but you know you don't want to do it for an hour, set a timer in another room (for however long you'd like to talk), and then enjoy your call," she said, "and when the oven timer goes off, just say, 'Oh, that's my timer! I'll talk to you next week.'"

It creates an invisible external force that the person you're talking to likely won't question. Up to you whether you decide to put something delicious in the oven to bake first.

Life & Style

Taika Waititi to direct new 'Star Wars' film

NEW YORK (AP)—Taika Waititi, the New Zealand filmmaker of "Jojo Rabbit" and "Thor: Ragnarok," will direct a new "Star Wars" film.

Waititi had for months been expected to take the reins of the galaxy far, far away, having already directed the season finale of the "Star Wars" streaming spinoff "The Mandalorian." But the Walt Disney Co. waited until the franchise's unofficial holiday, May the Fourth, to make Waititi's hire official.

Waititi will co-write the film with Krysty Wilson-Cains, who wrote the World War I thriller "1917" with Sam Mendes. Both Waititi and Wilson-Cains were screenplay nominees at the Academy Awards earlier this year; Wilson-Cains for the original script to "1917" and Waititi for his adapted Nazi satire "Jojo Rabbit." Waititi won.

Waititi

The announcement potentially suggests the new path forward for "Star Wars" theatrical films following considerable upheaval in Lucasfilm's development plans. Last October, "Game of Thrones" David Benioff and D.B. Weiss departed their planned trilogy. Rian Johnson, director of "The Last Jedi," was developing a separate trilogy but its status is unclear. Johnson has instead been focused on a sequel to his 2019 film, "Knives Out."

In December, Lucasfilm wrapped up the Skywalker saga with the release of "The Rise of Skywalker." But that release was the worst reviewed of the previous eight "Star Wars" films and not as strong at the box office. It grossed $1.08 billion.

To help rejuvenate the franchise, Disney has turned to Marvel president Kevin Feige (who produced Waititi's "Thor: Ragnarok") and Jon Favreau, creator of the well-received "The Mandalorian."

Hanks, who survived COVID-19, calls graduates 'the chosen'

DAYTON, Ohio (AP)—Tom Hanks says graduates of an Ohio university that named a film center after him are "the chosen ones."

The Oscar-winning actor delivered a surprise virtual speech Saturday to the graduates of Wright State University's Department of Theatre, Dance and Motion Pictures. The video was posted shortly before the ceremony began.

Hanks

"You are the chosen ones because of a fate unimagined when you began your Wright State adventures," Hanks said. "You started in the olden times, in a world back before the great pandemic of 2020. You will talk of those earlier years in your lives in just that way."

Hanks was among the first major Hollywood figures to announce he had COVID-19, the disease caused by the coronavirus that is ravaging the planet.

Hanks isn't an alumnus of Wright State but has connections with teachers and alumni of the school in Dayton.

Journey cancels 2020 tour because of coronavirus pandemic

NEW YORK (AP)—Journey is the latest act to cancel their 2020 tour because of the coronavirus pandemic.

The rock band was supposed to kick off their new tour on May 15 but announced Monday that they would no longer hit the road. Band members said they decided to cancel the tour, instead of postponing it, so that concert-goers would qualify for immediate refunds.

"Having seen what the world has endured during the last 45 days, and not knowing what the rest of this year or 2021 will bring, we knew the right thing to do was to make sure our fans' health was not put in jeopardy and to provide immediate access to refund options given the unexpected events caused by this terrible virus," Journey's Neal Schon, Jonathan Cain and Arnel Pineda said in a joint statement Monday.

The five-month trek included 60-plus shows. The Pretenders were scheduled to also perform on the tour.

Author says prequel to 'Twilight' series will arrive Aug. 4

NEW YORK (AP)—"The Midnight Sun" will finally appear.

Stephenie Meyer's long-awaited prequel to her "Twilight" series is coming out Aug. 4, the author announced on her website (www.stepheniemeyer.com) Monday. "The Midnight Sun" is narrated from vampire Edward Cullen's perspective.

Meyer had kept her fans in suspense all weekend with a countdown clock on her site that promised a major announcement. The site soon crashed Monday morning, but the book was also announced by Meyer's publisher, Little, Brown Books for Young Readers.

Meyer

"It feels strange to be making this announcement when the world is suffering through a pandemic, and no one really knows what's next. I thought seriously about delaying this announcement until things were back to normal; however, that felt wrong, considering how long those who are eager for this book have already waited," Meyer said in a statement.

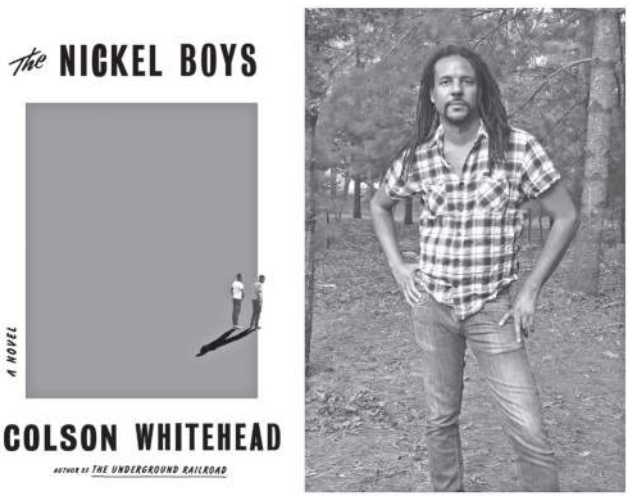
"I know how much I personally need distractions right now, how much I need something to look forward to, and most of all, how much I need more books to read. So, I hope this book gives my readers a little pleasure to anticipate and, after it arrives, a chance to live in an imaginary world for a while."

Colson Whitehead's 'The Nickel Boys' wins Pulitzer Prize

NEW YORK (AP)—Colson Whitehead became the rare author to receive Pulitzers for consecutive books when his novel about a brutal Florida reform school during the Jim Crow era, "The Nickel Boys," was awarded the fiction prize Monday. Three years ago, he won for his Civil War era novel "The Underground Railroad."

Pulitzer judges praised "The Nickel Boys" as "a spare and devastating exploration of abuse" that is "ultimately a powerful tale of human perseverance, dignity and redemption." Whitehead, 50, is known for his experimental narratives and immersion in American history and folklore. His previous works include "John Henry Days" and "The Intuitionist."

In a statement issued through his publisher, Doubleday, Whitehead said the news of his winning Monday was "pretty nuts!"



AP

This combination photo shows the cover of "The Nickel Boys," left, and a portrait of author Colson Whitehead.

"Obviously I'm very honored and I hope that it raises awareness of the real life model for the novel—The Dozier School for Boys—so that the victims and their stories are not forgotten," he said.

William Faulkner and John Updike are among the previous fiction writers to win more than one Pulitzer, but not for books that immediately followed the other.

Reconnecting with son's dad makes recent divorcee giddy

DEAR ABBY: I just divorced my husband. We were together for 13 years. The last three weren't great. After my divorce—which was grueling—I reconnected with my son's father, and we are in love. Our romance was doomed before it started back then. Our son is now 18, and we are in our 40s.

Today, our situation is very different. We are both doing well financially and individually. We are blissfully happy and don't rehash the past. I feel like we were interrupted when we were young. Am I crazy for feeling he is THE ONE? I really want it to work.

IN LOVE IN NEVADA

DEAR IN LOVE: You aren't crazy, but you are recently divorced and didn't mention how long you have been "reconnected" with your son's father. I urge you to put the brakes on and take the time to get to know each other again. I also think you SHOULD rehash the past because unless the problems of years ago are resolved, they may be repeated. Time will tell if he is, indeed, "The One," and fortunately, you both have plenty of it. I wish you a happy ending.

DEAR ABBY: I have five nieces and nephews. With the exception of one nephew, my wife and I have attended all of their weddings. They were all invited to and attended our daughter's wedding.

The last nephew is being married next year. All of his cousins are invited, with the exception of my daughter. Why? Even though she is the same age as the rest of his cousins, he says he doesn't know her that well.

Should my wife and I attend his wedding? If we do, I will insist he invite my daughter as well. Kindly provide your opinion.

EXCLUDED IN CONNECTICUT

DEAR EXCLUDED: Excluding your daughter so glaringly guarantees that your nephew and his wife will never get to know her. However, you cannot, and should not, attempt to control your nephew's guest list by threatening not to attend if your daughter isn't invited. If you would feel uncomfortable accepting the invitation under these circumstances, send your regrets on the RSVP card. If you are asked why you won't be coming, feel free to express yourself then.

DEAR ABBY: I have been in a relationship for almost a year. We connected in a way I have never felt before, and I tried to stay away from him. He's married, and his wife was diagnosed with cancer last year.

I have tried to end things three times so he could focus on his family. But he keeps coming back to me and begging me to wait, give him time and not abandon him. I feel so guilty for the things I want from him because of his wife's condition.

I don't know what to do. I want to be with him. But I don't want to cause his family to struggle more on top of everything else. Please help.

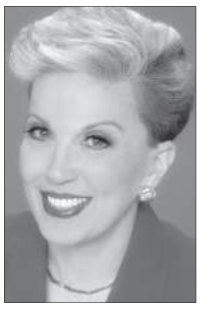
DIFFICULT SITUATION

DEAR SITUATION: If you are sincere about not wanting to cause this man's family more pain, STEP AWAY NOW. His wife should be the focus of his attention. If this relationship is the real thing, it can be restarted when he is free from the responsibility he assumed when he promised "until death do us part."

To receive a collection of Abby's most memorable – and most frequently requested – poems and essays, send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for $8 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby – Keepers Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. Shipping and handling are included in the price.

DEAR ABBY

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

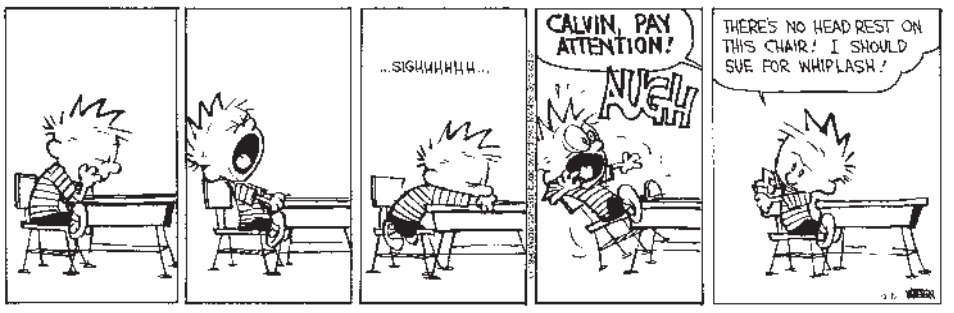


Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson



Garfield®

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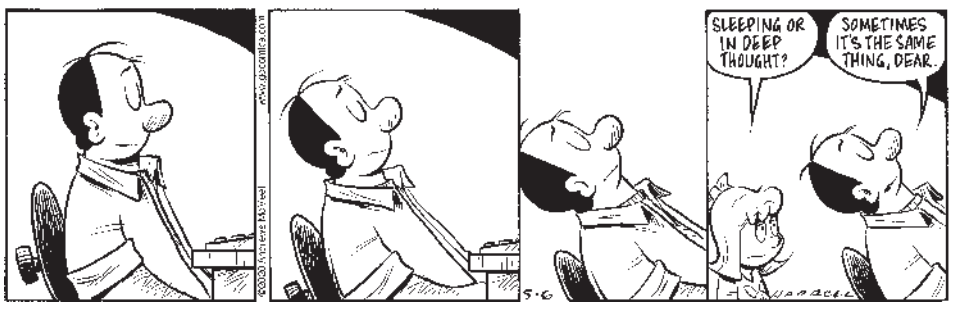
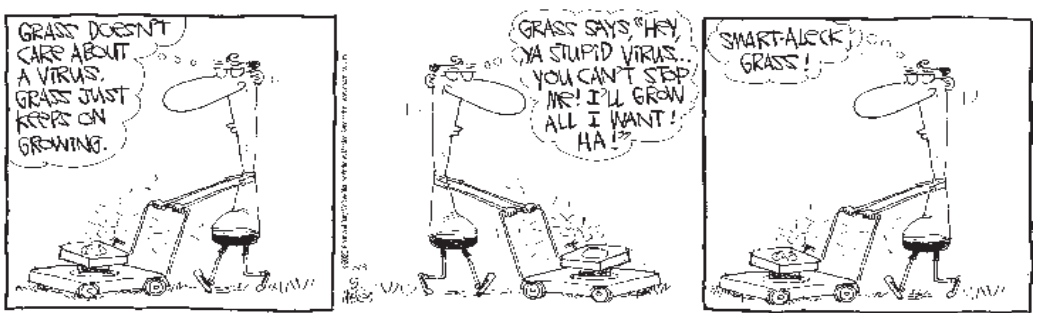
Adam@home

By Bryan Basset



The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy


GRASS DOESN'T CARE ABOUT A VIRUS. GRASS JUST KEEPS ON GROWING.
GRASS SAYS, "HEY, YA STUPID VIRUS... YOU CAN'T STOP ME! I'LL GROW ALL I WANT! HA!"
SMART-ALECK GRASS!

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

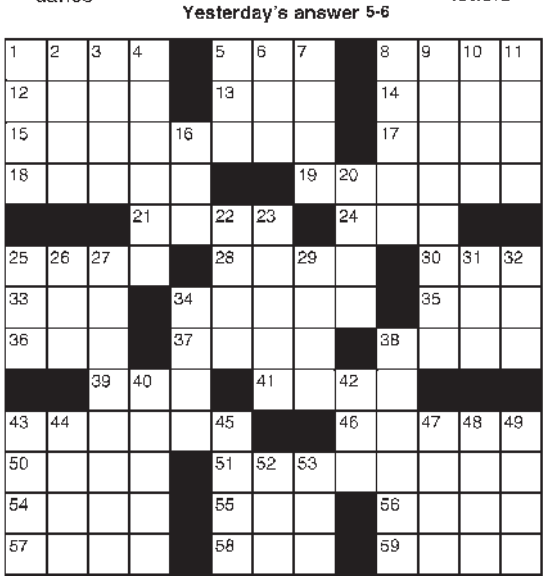
ACROSS
1 Regimen
5 Turkish topper
8 Driver with a handle
12 Poet — St. Vincent Millay
13 "Exodus" hero
14 Lariat
15 Pillow-cases and sheets
17 Plow pullers
18 Shocking weapon
19 Stored in the fridge
21 Aspen gear
24 Bearded beast
25 Rubik's brain-teaser
28 Fly high
30 Snooze
33 Alias abbr.
34 On edge
35 When doubled, it's a dance
36 Entanglement
37 Miami team
38 Roe provider
39 One of us
41 Laugh-a-minute
43 Whale variety
46 Pollster's find
50 Oodles
51 Martial arts film star
54 Not pre-recorded
55 Train alternative
56 Airline to Tel Aviv
57 Antelope's playmate
58 Tummy muscles
59 Fraction

DOWN
1 Owed amount
2 Notion
3 Termini
4 "Honor Thy Father" author
5 Summer cooler
6 Before
7 Galvanizing metal
8 Sing like Sinatra
9 Meal in a container
10 Fencing sword
11 Tear
16 Annoy
20 Monster
22 "Got it"
23 Sub detector
25 Cornfield noise
26 Luau instrument
27 Supremes hit song of 1964
29 Sparkling Italian wine
31 "Caught ya!"
32 Writer's block?
34 Hoodlum
38 Meryl of "The Post"
40 External
42 Non-Rx
43 Hardly hirsute
44 Author Wiesel
45 "Waterloo" group
47 First lady of scat
48 Close
49 Shoulder muscle, for short
52 Massage
53 Aircraft carrier letters

Solution time: 23 mins.

C	G	G	S	■	P	A	W	■	T	A	P	S
T	A	U	T	■	I	C	H	■	P	H	E	A
A	B	S	E	N	T	E	E	■	E	A	R	N
■	■	■	A	Π	T	■	Ͳ	A	B	B	I	S
K	A	Π	M	A	■	P	E	R	E	■	■	■
C	L	A	Y	■	B	L	A	C	K	T	E	A
T	A	G	■	B	E	A	M	S	■	I	N	C
B	I	S	C	O	T	T	I	■	B	E	T	H
■	■	■	H	E	R	E	■	P	L	R	S	E
C	A	M	E	Π	A	■	T	I	M	■	■	■
C	B	O	E	■	Y	O	S	E	M	I	T	E
B	E	A	K	■	E	R	A	■	E	R	I	K
B	L	T	S	■	D	E	Ξ	■	D	A	N	G

Yesterday's answer 5-6



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955**! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Gabourey Sidibe, 37; George Clooney, 59; Tom Bergeron, 65; Willie Mays, 89.

Happy Birthday: Refuse to let uncertainty take over. Look at every angle and talk to an expert, but don't miss out or give up. Get the lowdown, and do whatever you can to keep up and pull ahead. Stay in control, and finish what you start. Anger and disappointment are a waste of time. Seize the moment, and make things happen. Your numbers are 8, 16, 21, 25, 33, 39, 47.

ARIES *(March 21-April 19):* Curiosity, coupled with the desire to get something done to enable you to accomplish twice as much in a shorter period. Don't let an opportunity pass by unnoticed. Take action, and finish what you start. Romance will enhance your life. ✪✪✪

TAURUS *(April 20-May 20):* Confidence will play a role when dealing with people who can influence your future. Stand tall, embrace opportunities and channel your energy into your accomplishments, not negativity or disturbance. Choose to be a savior, not a problem. Don't waffle. ✪✪✪

GEMINI *(May 21-June 20):* Be secretive about what you plan to do next. Put everything in place before you make broad statements or promises. Uncertainty will set in if you haven't thought through your plans thoroughly. Keep your life simple in order to ease stress. ✪✪✪

CANCER *(June 21-July 22):* Look at your options, and choose the best path. Embrace change instead of being forced into a position where it's too little, too late. Be proactive and open about the way you feel, and you'll accomplish what you set out to do. ✪✪✪✪

LEO *(July 23-Aug. 22):* Find a way to relax. A physical outlet will help you distance yourself from complicated matters. Keep your emotions in check and your actions reserved until you have a workable plan in place. Don't complicate things unnecessarily. ✪✪

VIRGO *(Aug. 23-Sept. 22):* Speak up, offer suggestions, gather information and be ready to make adjustments. How you proceed will make a difference in the way others view you. The right move will enhance your chance to advance. Social media, online educational courses and communication are favored. Promote positive change. ✪✪✪✪

LIBRA *(Sept. 23-Oct. 22):* Consider money, legal and health issues carefully. Don't feel pressured to make a hasty decision if you feel uncertain. A physical challenge will help take your mind off pressing matters and give you a chance to rethink your next move. ✪✪✪

SCORPIO *(Oct. 23-Nov. 21):* Jump to it, and get things done. Refuse to let your emotions slow you down or push you in a direction that leads to negativity or poor decisions. Embrace positive change and opportunities that will improve meaningful relationships. ✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS *(Nov. 22-Dec. 21):* Listen to complaints, but don't be too eager to take on tasks that don't belong to you. Offer suggestions, but get back to fulfilling your duties. Make plans to spend time with someone you love or who shares your desire for adventure. ✪✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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CAPRICORN *(Dec. 22-Jan. 19):* Keep life simple. If you or someone else overreacts, it will ruin your plans and your day. Focus on how you can make life better for you as well as the people around you. Positive change begins within. ✪✪✪✪

AQUARIUS *(Jan. 20-Feb. 18):* Take your time. Don't feel pressured to do what everyone else is doing. Concentrate on personal gain, health, and looking and feeling your best. Take responsibility for your happiness, and offer a positive attitude to everyone you encounter. ✪✪

PISCES *(Feb. 19-March 20):* Channel your energy into something that matters and makes a difference. Look over your finances, budget for something you want, negotiate contracts and take better care of yourself physically, financially and emotionally. Avoid manipulative people and situations. ✪✪✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are sensitive, caring and protective. You are ambitious and proactive.

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SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

				3				
	2		1		8			
	5	8				1		
	6						1	
7								9
2	1					7	8	3
	9		4	8			2	
	3		6	2			5	
	8	2	5	7	3	6	9	

Difficulty Level ★★★ 5/06

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's Answer

4	5	8	6	1	3	9	2	7
2	3	9	5	7	4	6	8	1
6	7	1	9	2	8	5	3	4
3	6	7	8	5	1	2	4	9
8	2	5	4	3	9	7	1	6
1	9	4	2	6	7	3	5	8
5	4	2	7	8	6	1	9	3
7	8	3	1	9	2	4	6	5
9	1	6	3	4	5	8	7	2

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WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the WONDERWORD.

SALES CHARTS — Solution: 10 letters

D	E	M	A	N	D	Y	R	T	S	U	D	N	I	L
E	M	U	B	L	A	K	C	R	N	M	U	L	O	C
S	C	S	T	U	C	U	A	I	S	T	R	E	A	M
E	Y	I	N	A	D	L	T	E	E	E	G	V	E	S
L	C	C	R	O	U	O	M	A	D	O	E	S	N	O
G	L	T	R	P	I	U	L	O	A	R	I	U	I	L
N	E	P	O	R	L	T	M	L	A	X	M	D	L	D
I	R	P	C	O	D	E	U	G	A	B	A	R	A	D
S	M	E	V	F	D	Y	E	B	E	R	L	E	N	L
C	O	S	T	I	E	U	N	Ⓡ	I	I	R	M	A	A
S	N	H	A	T	N	T	Y	A	Ⓐ	R	O	O	L	T
A	E	N	R	E	A	A	O	T	P	Ⓝ	T	T	Y	I
T	Y	E	V	I	L	P	E	T	T	M	Ⓚ	S	S	G
A	N	E	H	P	A	R	G	H	A	P	O	U	I	I
D	R	O	C	E	R	A	D	N	E	L	A	C	S	D

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Album, Analysis, Average, Axis, Calendar, Code, Column, Company, Cost, Customer, Cuts, Cycle, Data, Demand, Digital, Distribution, Dollar, Goal, Graph, Industry, Line, Median, Mode, Money, Month, Music, Number, Pattern, Play, Popular, Price, Product, Profit, Radio, Rank, Record, Retail, Revenue, Singles, Sold, Stream, Total, Track, Trend, Unit, Volume

Yesterday's Answer: Policies

Treasuries 14, 15, 17, 18 and 21 through 39 can be purchased online at www.WonderWordBooks.com.

Last Dance gets into Bulls-Knicks rivalry

CHICAGO—In the early 1990s, the New York Knicks had followed the Bad Boy Pistons blueprint—build a physical, aggressive team with just enough skill to get the job done, then grind the other team into submission. It worked, except against the Chicago Bulls. That didn't change the plan—coach Pat Riley told his Knicks to go out and knock Michael Jordan to the ground when he drove the lane (sound familiar).

"We hated each other. It was extremely physical. It wasn't really a foul until you drew blood," is how Patrick Ewing described it in The Last Dance on Sunday night.

It led to arguably the best rivalry of the 1990s, something the documentary got into in some detail. The Knicks and Bulls met six times in the playoffs over the course of eight seasons.

It's hard to overstate the hatred in that Bulls-Knicks rivalry at the time — the games were must watch and you expected there would be a fight. You almost pitied the referees.

The Knicks, however, never got past Jordan's Bulls (New York did beat Chicago in 1994, when Jordan was playing baseball, but lost to Jordan five times).

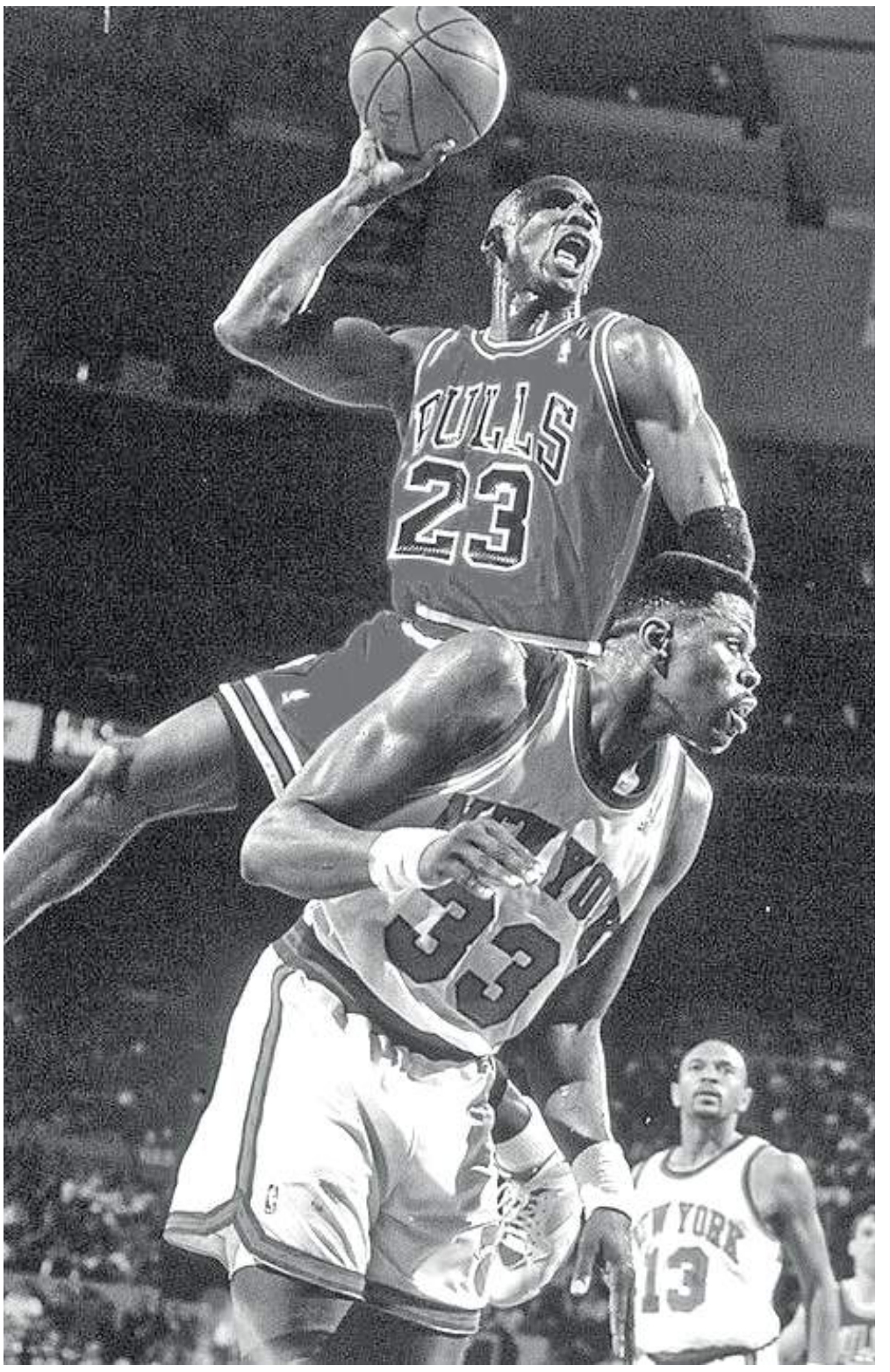
The show spotlighted the 1993 Eastern Conference Finals, when the Knicks raced out to a 2-0 series lead, John Starks was dunking over Horace Grant and Jordan.

Then New York dropped the next four games.

Game 5 is remembered as the Charles Smith game—the Bulls were up by one but the Knicks had a chance to score and take the lead. The ball ended up in the hands of 6'10" Charles Smith, a guy not known as a scorer but who averaged 10 points a game that season and he was right at the rim, but so were Jordan, Pippen, and Grant.

It was a lot of heartbreak for the Knicks, yet it is an era remembered fondly in New York (in part because there hasn't been sustained success since). Those rough-and-tumble Knicks epitomized the physical basketball of the period.

Unfortunately for the Knicks, Jordan had the grit and skill to rise above it. And win.



AP

In this June 3, 1993 file photo, Chicago Bulls' Michael Jordan, left, dunks over New York Knicks' Patrick Ewing during the second half of Game 5 of the Eastern Conference finals in New York.

Jordan denies role in Thomas Dream Team snub

The original Dream Team that crushed opponents on its way to the gold medal at the 1992 Barcelona Olympics created headlines with its play and international impact with its legacy.

But the power of that team wasn't limited to on the court, or even by the ensuing influx of international players who made their way to the NBA. In the annals of history, it serves as a central point to one of the more iconic beefs in NBA history, as well.

That feud is the enduring one between Isaiah Thomas and Jordan, which didn't end when the Bulls finally broke through the Bad Boy-era Pistons in 1991.

The Last Dance explores Thomas' well documented exclusion from the Dream Team, for which Pistons coach Chuck Daly served as coach.

"I don't know what went into that process," Thomas said in a present-day interview. "I met the criteria to be selected. But I wasn't."

It's long been rumored that Jordan's contentious history with Thomas has been behind the snub. Jordan addresses the storyline in Episode 5 of the documentary.

"I respect Isiah Thomas' talent. To me, the best point guard of all time is Magic Johnson and right behind him is Isaiah Thomas. No matter how much I hate him, I respect his game," Jordan said. "Now it was insinuated that I was asking about him. But I never threw his name in there.

"Based on the environment and camaraderie that happened on that team, it was the best harmony. Would Isiah have made a different feeling on that team? Yes. You want to attribute it to me? Go ahead, be my guest. But it wasn't me."

Clippers owner buy The Forum

Meanwhile, Los Angeles Clippers owner Steve Ballmer on Monday completed his purchase of The Forum from Madison Square Garden Entertainment Corp. for $400 million.

Newly created Forum Entertainment LLC will continue operating the building that opened in 1967 as a concert venue. The current management team will remain in place and report to Gillian Zucker, president of business operations for the Clippers.

All of The Forum's California-based staff are expected to stay on as employees of the new company and help with the transition.

"The talented team at The Forum has created a world-class live entertainment venue, and we are committed to building upon that reputation," Zucker said in a statement.

The Clippers' plans for a new, privately financed NBA arena in Inglewood near The Forum are progressing, with public hearings slated to start this summer. The Clippers said that having a basketball arena and The Forum under the same ownership will allow for coordinated programming between the venues, improving traffic congestion around basketball games and concerts.

Last year, the Forum hosted nearly 100 events, including concerts, boxing and mixed martial arts. It was previously the home of the NBA's Los Angeles Lakers and NHL's Los Angeles Kings until both teams moved to Staples Center in downtown LA in 1999. ***(NBC)***

McIlroy, Johnson headline charity match for COVID-19 relief

FLORIDA (AP)—Live golf returns to television in just under two weeks with a $3 million charity skins match for COVID-19 relief that includes Rory McIlroy, Dustin Johnson and the broadcast debut of fabled Seminole Golf Club.

McIlroy and Johnson, both major champions who have reached No. 1 in the world, will face Oklahoma State alumni Rickie Fowler and Matthew Wolff in an event billed as the "TaylorMade Driving Relief."

UnitedHealth Group Inc. is backing the $3 million donation. McIlroy and Johnson are playing for the American Nurses Foundation, while Fowler and Wolff will play for the CDC Foundation.

All four players have endorsements and relationships with the groups involved. Farmers Insurance has pledged $1 million for a birdies-and-eagle pool to benefit "Off Their Plate," which supports COVID-19 health care workers. PGA Tour Charities will have a "text-to-donate" online program for viewers to pledge additional money.

It will be the first live golf since the pandemic shut down sports worldwide seven weeks ago. And it will be the first time that Seminole, the Donald Ross course in South Florida, has a televised event.

Seminole is located on a tiny tract along the Atlantic Ocean in Juno Beach, designed in such a manner that nearly every shot faces a slightly different wind direction. It has never been ranked out of the top 20 on Golf Digest's list of "America's 100 Greatest Golf Courses" since the ranking began in 1966.

"I hope that we can provide some respite and entertainment for those tuning in across the globe," McIlroy said.

The charity match will be televised by NBC networks, including Golf Channel, along with Sky Sports and the PGA Tour's global TV partners. It also will be streamed live on various platforms.

Mike Tirico will provide commentary from his home in Michigan, while analysts such as Paul Azinger will work from an off-site production set. Two TV reporters will be on the course.

The tour said it would follow strict CDC social distancing guidance and local orders and use what it described as appropriate testing to protect the health of the players, production crew and others on site. No spectators will be allowed.

"Golf fans around the world can look forward to a unique, interactive and entertaining event that will help those in need," PGA Tour Commissioner Jay Monahan said.

Tiger Woods and Phil Mickelson are to play an exhibition match with NFL greats Tom Brady and Peyton Manning, though details such as the date and the course have yet to be announced.

Official golf is not expected to return until June 11-14 at Colonial in Texas, although the tour is still trying to work out details on essential personnel and testing that would be required.

Live golf was last seen on TV on March 12, the first round of The Players Championship. The tour first decided to eliminate fans, and then that night after the first round canceled the rest of the tournament. More tournaments subsequently were canceled or postponed.

Golf courses in Palm Beach County, where all four players live, were closed until late last week. McIlroy, who turned 31 on Monday, said on NBC's "Today" show that he went seven weeks without playing until getting out to the range last week.

McIlroy returned to No. 1 in the world in February and has been there a total of 100 weeks. Johnson has been No. 1 a total of 91 weeks. Of active players, only Woods (683) has been at No. 1 more often.

Fowler is one of the game's more appealing players, while Wolff is regarded as one of the more explosive young stars. The 21-year-old from California won his first PGA Tour event a month after leaving Oklahoma State.

It will be an early preview for Seminole, which next year is to host the Walker Cup.

Wentz embracing Eagles' decision to draft Hurts

AP
In this Nov 24, 2019 file photo, Philadelphia Eagles quarterback Carson Wentz (11) is held down by Seattle Seahawks outside linebacker Shaquem Griffin (49) during the first half of an NFL game at Lincoln Financial Field in Philadelphia

PHILADELPHIA (AP)—The Philadelphia Eagles' decision to draft Jalen Hurts in the second round has been one of the most intensely debated NFL topics over the past 10 days.

Carson Wentz isn't questioning it.

"I'm excited to add him to the team," Wentz said Monday. "I know how important the quarterback position is and how important the dynamic is for me and the other guys in that room. I've been blessed to have not just incredible quarterbacks but incredible humans and friends in that quarterback room. We really endure a lot together and go through a lot together. ... Excited to add him to the fold and create a really good and healthy competitive, challenging environment for all of us."

The Eagles picked TCU wide receiver Jalen Reagor in the first round and used the No. 53 pick to draft another quarterback instead of adding another playmaker on offense to help their franchise quarterback. The team then stocked up on speedy wideouts on Day 3, acquiring speedster Marquise Goodwin from the 49ers, and drafting Boise State's John Hightower in the fifth round and Southern Mississippi's Quez Watkins in the sixth.

Ohio State running back J.K. Dobbins was on the board when personnel boss Howie Roseman chose Hurts. Dobbins went two picks later to Baltimore, which had the league's top rushing offense in 2019.

"If I were to start questioning Howie and the management now, I'd really be questioning myself," said Wentz, who signed a $128 million, four-year contract extension last summer. "When I signed the deal that I did, it was really my way of showing that I trust and believe in what we're doing in Philly and they trust and believe in me, so I have nothing but confidence and excited to get to work."

Hurts transferred from Alabama to Oklahoma after losing his starting job to Tua Tagovailoa and was runnerup for the Heisman Trophy last year when he threw for 3,851 yards and 32 touchdowns. The Eagles will look to develop his skills and perhaps use him in variety of ways on offense.

"All I've wanted to do is win and stand up there and hold that Lombardi trophy," said Wentz, who was forced to watch from the sideline when a knee injury ended his sophomore season and Nick Foles led the team to the franchise's first Super Bowl title. "Whatever that takes and whatever that looks like, I'm on board. I'm a competitor. I want to be out there. I want to have the ball in my hands; we all do. But at the same time, whatever is going to help us win, I'm confident the coaches and everyone is going to put us in the best situation."

Wentz led an injury-depleted offense to four straight wins in December with a group of receivers off the practice squad and waiver wire. The Eagles won the NFC East title but lost to Seattle in a wild-card game after Wentz suffered a concussion in the first quarter.

"It's scary stuff," Wentz said of the concussion. "It kind of changes a lot of things in your brain, and you only get one of these brains and you've got to protect it. It was tough to see the finish of that game. That was the end of our season. It was frustrating not to be out there."

Wentz became a first-time dad last week when his wife, Madison, gave birth to a daughter, Hadley Jayne. He's been able to spend more time with his family because teams are conducting offseason workouts virtually during the coronavirus shutdown.

Wentz's AO1 Foundation had to cancel its annual charity softball game that was scheduled for Friday at Citizens Bank Park, home of the Phillies. Instead, his foundation, which already allocated $100,000 toward an initiative for coronavirus relief efforts in the Philadelphia area will host a "day of relief" on Friday. It's a "24-hour virtual fundraising campaign to support its latest initiative, Love From The Crumb."

"It's a fun, interactive way to give back," Wentz said. "To just give grocery boxes to people on the front line, people struggling in need, that's been fun to see people be blessed during these challenging and difficult time we're living in.

NFL regular season schedule out Thursday

NEW YORK (AP)—The NFL will release its regular-season schedule on Thursday night, the league announced Monday, as it continues conducting business mostly as usual amid the coronavirus pandemic.

The schedule will be revealed in a 3-hour telecast on NFL Network starting at 8 p.m. Eastern.

Thus far, the league has not announced any major changes to its schedule as a result of the pandemic, which has brought most organized sports around the globe to a halt. NFL training facilities are closed because of the pandemic, leading to the league's first-ever "virtual offseason," but the league still plans to start the season on time while playing in teams' home stadiums.

Opening day for the 2020 season is Sept. 10, with the season set to conclude with Super Bowl 55 on February 7, 2021. The NFL also held last month's draft on time while canceling all in-person events. The draft had been set for Las Vegas; instead, Commissioner Roger Goodell announced picks from his home.

Should the pandemic force major changes to the season, the league is considering alternatives including empty stadiums, neutral sites and getting rid of bye weeks, league executive Troy Vincent told The Associated Press last week. Any such changes would have to be approved by the players union.

London, Mexico games moved back to US

Earlier Monday, the NFL announced it was moving its five games scheduled for London and Mexico City this season back to U.S. stadiums.

Scheduled were two home games for the Jacksonville Jaguars at Wembley Stadium in London and two at Tottenham's new facility, with the Atlanta Falcons and Miami Dolphins as hosts. The Arizona Cardinals were to be the home team for the game at Azteca Stadium in Mexico City.

Opponents had not been announced.

The NFL said in a statement Monday that "in order for the entire season to be played in NFL teams' stadia under consistent protocols focused on the well-being of players, personnel and fans ... Commissioner Roger Goodell made this decision after consultation with our clubs, national and local governments, the NFL Players Association, medical authorities and international stadium partners."

The NFL has staged regular-season games in London every year since 2007. Since 2013, the Jaguars have hosted one game there each season.

"While the NFL's many fans in London, the U.K. and Europe will obviously be disappointed by this news, it is absolutely the right decision to ensure the safety of everyone involved in the sport," London Mayor Sadiq Khan said. "I know that the NFL remains fully committed to London and I look forward to welcoming NFL teams back to the capital in 2021."

Mexico City has had a regular-season game in 2016, 2017 and 2019.

"After considerable analysis, we believe the decision to play all our games domestically this season is the right one for our players, our clubs, and all our fans in the U.S., Mexico and U.K.," said Christopher Halpin, an NFL executive vice president. "We greatly appreciate the support of our governmental and stadium partners in Mexico and the United Kingdom, who all agree with this decision, and we look forward to returning for games in both countries in the 2021 season."

Shula remembered

In Miami, Don Shula often said he wanted to be remembered for playing within the rules, and that's what happened Monday.

In the wake of his death at age 90, an outpouring of tributes from around the NFL saluted not only Shula's two Super Bowl championships and NFL-record 347 coaching victories, but also the way he won.

"He's one of the great credits to the game that has ever been," said Shula's longtime friendly rival, former Buffalo Bills coach Marv Levy. "The fact he was the winningest coach in the history of the league and did it by playing by the rules and honoring the game—certainly that is impressive. He'll be remembered for the success he had and also the type of person he was, for his ability and also his character."

NFL coaches, players and commissioners past and present were among those to praise Shula's legacy. The group included Jimmy Johnson and Bill Belichick, even though both were regarded frostily by Shula.

"Don Shula represented the highest standards of excellence by virtually any measure," former Commissioner Paul Tagliabue said. "His contributions to the NFL and the game of football extended far beyond his all-time record victory total. Don also was an all-time winner when it came to integrity, honesty and class."

Shula spent more than 20 years on the powerful competition committee, which evaluates playing rules, and he always valued his reputation for integrity.

US women's team players have options after setback

CALIFORNIA (AP)—Players for the U.S. women's national team may have been dealt a blow by a judge's ruling in their gender discrimination lawsuit against the U.S. Soccer Federation but the case is far from over.

The women have vowed to keep up the fight, encouraged by the likes of Joe Biden, Billie Jean King and even the men's national team.

"This is just a setback," King said when asked what she would tell the team. "There's so many of these ups and downs. Just keep learning from it, keep going for it. You're still such a great influence, not only in soccer, but for equality for everyone."

King, who was calling for equitable prize money in tennis in the 1970s, once famously proclaimed: "Everyone thinks women should be thrilled when we get crumbs, and I want women to have the cake, the icing and the cherry on top, too."

The players sued the federation last year, claiming they have not been paid equally under their collective bargaining agreement to what the men's national team receives under its labor deal. They asked for more than $66 million in damages under the Equal Pay Act and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

AP

In this Feb. 9, 2020 file photo, U.S. midfielder Julie Ertz kicks the ball past Canada defender Kadeisha Buchanan during the second half of a CONCACAF women's Olympic qualifying match in Carson, Calif.

The federal judge threw out the players' claim of discriminatory pay Friday in a surprising loss for the defending World Cup champions. U.S. District Judge R. Gary Klausner said the women rejected a pay-to-play structure like the men's agreement and accepted greater base salaries and benefits.

But he allowed aspects of their allegations of discriminatory working conditions to go forward.

The trial remains scheduled for June 16 in federal court in Los Angeles.

Players have vowed to appeal the judge's decision.

There are several legal options. Players could seek to overturn Friday's decision at the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, and could even discuss with the USSF the possibility of a joint application for a stay pending appeal. They could proceed with a trial limited to working conditions such as flights, hotels and medical staff, then appeal Friday's ruling.

Or the sides could seek to settle, perhaps as part of a deal to replace and extend the current collective bargaining agreement, which expires on Dec. 31, 2021.

Biden, the presumptive Democratic presidential nominee, went to Twitter this weekend to encourage the players.

"To @USWNT: don't give up this fight. This is not over yet. To @ussoccer: equal pay, now. Or else when I'm president, you can go elsewhere for World Cup funding," he posted, referring to the 2026 men's World Cup, set to be hosted by the United States, Mexico and Canada.

The players' association for the men's national team also released a statement Monday expressing support.

"For a year and a half the USMNT players have made proposals to the federation that would achieve equal pay for the USMNT and USWNT players," the statement said. "We understand the WNT players plan to appeal last week's decision and we support them."

Steven A. Bank, a professor at UCLA, said he was expecting Klausner's decision on the summary judgment to focus the case but not to the degree it did.

SONG

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distance runs and has earned his share of victories in local and interscholastic races. Last year, Song represented the CNMI in the 2019 Asia Pacific Invitational Cross-Country Championships in Japan and was awarded an All-Island Team honors after making it to the Top 15 (among the more than 100 finishers from Japan, Guam, and the CNMI). He was the first Commonwealth runner to complete the 5K course after timing in at 18:23.2 for the No. 12 spot overall in the boys division.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The CNMI Junior Tennis Team players and coach Jeff Race celebrate after winning the Nations Cup in the 2017 Pacific Oceania Junior Championships in Fiji.

FOOTCAST

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the national team to new and younger players and inspire them," said MP United Football Club technical director and Northern Mariana Islands Football Association Executive Committee member Norman Del Rosario, the creator of the podcast.

"We will be featuring the heroes of the national team and their significant role in shaping the NMI soccer," he added.

Del Rosario said he is still working for the perfect time to air the pilot episode, but the series is scheduled weekly and will be shown at #supportlocalsoccer #wearenmi.

SAIPAN TRIBUNE

Members of the CNMI Women's National Team pose for a group photo before playing against host Guam in the 2009 Marianas Cup.

"There are many off-island players, so we have to see what schedule will work for them and for us," the former CNMI Men's National Team manager added.

Though there's no schedule yet on the pilot episode, Del Rosario said "Footcast with Norman" will kick off with a conversation with Emily Gries Maxberry, Patricia Coleman, Natalie Hill, and Lindsay Davis, who were members of the first CNMI Women's National Team.

The four players along with Meaghan Hassel-Shearer, Katie Peters, Rebecca Newman, Francine Sablan, Jennifer Linden, Maryana Gramlich, Brenda Schultz, Zoe Jewell, Rima Halaby, Divya Sharma, Madison Smith, Elisa Fejeran, Nikki Gabaldon, Ashley Hofschneider, Connie Camacho, and Amanda Allen were named to the 2007 national squad that bowed to Guam (0-7) in the inaugural Marianas Cup. The following year, Coleman, Hill, Davis, and Maxberry suited up for the national team anew and this time forced Guam to a draw.

The national players continued their progress while facing more challenges, as they also competed in East Asian Football Confederation and Asian Football Confederation-sanctioned tournaments.

Last Dance gets into Bulls-Knicks rivalry

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Wentz embracing Eagles' decision to draft Hurts

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Song eyes collegiate play

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

Pacific Games gold medalist Ken Song has completed his junior tennis career and wishes to continue playing in the collegiate level.

"I am graduating this year and will be attending Sewanee The University of the South. I've been in contact with the tennis coach and he is interested, but still needs me to try out when I get there," the Saipan International School senior said.

The Sewanee Tigers compete in the Southern Athletic Association in the National Collegiate Athletic Association Division II and against Birmingham-Southern College, Centre College, Hendrix College, Millsaps College, Oglethorpe University, Berry College, and Rhodes College.

Song is aiming to suit up for Sewanee after representing the CNMI in several regional competitions in the last five years.

The recent one was the 2019 Pacific Games in Apia, Samoa where he worked with fellow college-bound athlete Robbie Schorr and pro player Colin Sinclair in handing the CNMI a gold medal in the men's team event.

"That was a fun and new experience. It's great to be able to win the gold medal for the CNMI and I thank Colin and Robbie for that," Song said.

Though he appreciated the opportunity to don the CNMI colors in the Pacific Games, Song treasured more the chance of playing for the Commonwealth's junior team and competing in the North Pacific Regional Championships and the Pacific Oceania Junior Championships.

"I wouldn't say I have any particular moment or win, but the summers I spent competing for the CNMI will always be engraved in me. I've made so many friends and really became who I am because of those trips. I'll definitely never forget all those times we went to Guam and Fiji to represent the CNMI. They will always be one of my fondest memories," said Song.

Besides seeing action in the North Pacific event and the POJC, Song also played in junior events in Australia and ITF Juniors competitions in Fiji and Saipan. He was also a member of the Pacific Oceania Team that advanced to the finals of the 2018 Junior Davis Cup Asia/Oceania Pre-Qualifying Event in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

When not playing tennis, Song is busy with his middle

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CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Ken Song, seen here returning a shot to Robbie Schorr during a local tournament at the Fiesta Resort & Spa Saipan tennis courts, is hoping to play in the collegiate ranks.

'Footcast with Norman' to relive NMI soccer moments

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

Want to know more about the pains and gains of CNMI soccer from the players that made significant contributions to the development of the program?

Tune in to "Footcast with Norman," a 10-part series that will feature former members of the CNMI national team and the squad's journey as they stepped in create the path to success for the future generation.

"The concept of the podcast is for CNMI players to share their stories, sacrifices, hard work, and fun memories with the team. In this way we could also share the history of

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CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Members of the CNMI Women's National Team celebrate after scoring their first international goal during their 2009 match against Macau in the East Asian Football Federation Women's Football Championship 2010 Semifinals Competition in Chinese-Taipei.

SAIPAN TRIBUNE
The CNMI's Mark McDonald, right, goes for a header against Guam goalie Brett Maluwelmeng and a Guam defender during the inaugural Marianas Cup in 2007 at the Oleai Sports Complex.